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DETECTIVE STORIES

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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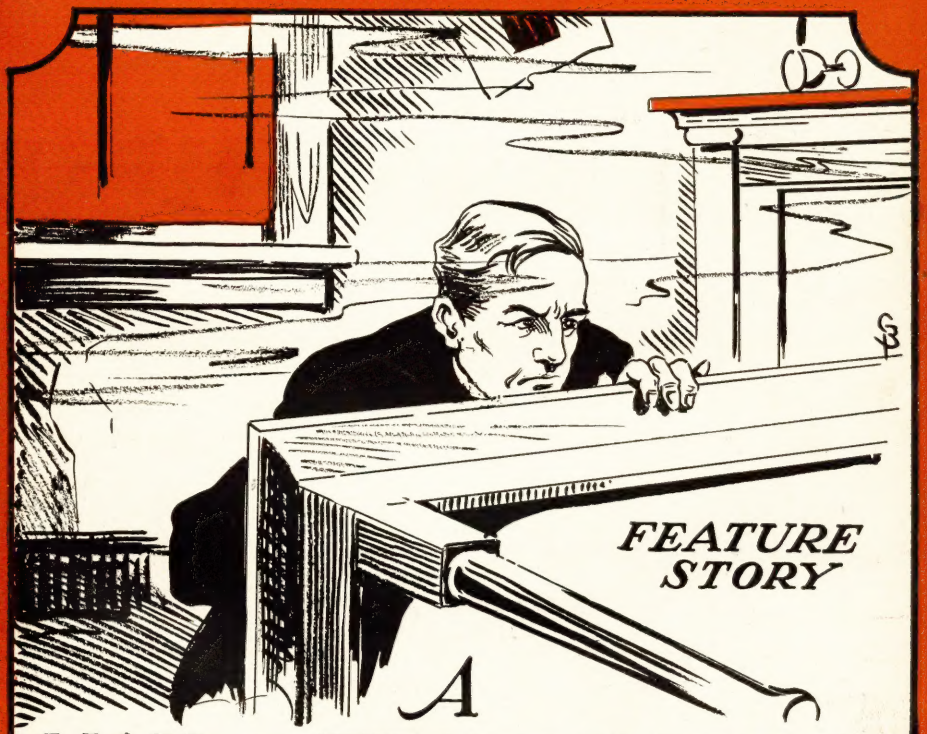

FEATURE STORY

A MAN *from* HEADQUARTERS

BY HAMILTON CRAIGIE

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

Vol. V. AUGUST 15, 1922 No. 115

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Hints of What's Coming

HAVE any of our readers ever read Carl Glick's stories? If you haven't, you can do so when you get the next number of "Mystery Magazine." The feature story was written by that gifted author. It is entitled "The Girl in the Case," and is one of the most interesting detective stories ever written. The story unfolds very much like a first-class drama on the stage and absorbs your attention unremittingly up to the conclusion. For a real literary treat you should read every line of it, and we are sure you will be quite pleased.

Among the short stories there will be "The Jiggin' Jug," a funny little incident in a police station where the government's minions have stored a quantity of hootch. Joe Burke has written a powerful melodrama for the next number, called "Triangle of Hate." It will certainly fascinate you. Don't miss reading it. Next on the program is "The Green Hat," by our old friend Hamilton Craigie. It is a detective story of unusual merit. Then we will have "Tom Turns Up," by Robert Russell. It is a very mystifying story with an odd twist at the end which contains an element of surprise.

We will also publish the third and last instalment of the serial "The Twenty-Dollar Plates," and are preparing an intensely interesting two-part story to follow it. Besides the titles mentioned above, there will be several more stories full of vim and adventure, and a number of special articles that will please you. The illustrations, too, are better than usual. In short, we hope to make the next issue one of the best we ever printed. When you read it, why don't you tell all your friends what a splendid magazine it is?

The price of it is lower than that of any similar publication and yet we are giving you as many stories as you get in higher priced magazines. And the beauty of it is that the same skilled authors write for us who contribute to the dearer monthlies. A great many wise and discriminating people have seen the advantages we are offering and are now steady readers of this publication, but we want to get as many more subscribers as we can. You can help us to do so by showing your copy of the magazine to one of your acquaintances. It may make a steady reader of him.

THE EDITOR.

A Man from Headquarters

by Hamilton Craigie

CHAPTER ONE

A MAN in a soft, shapeless black hat, but otherwise of an impeccable neatness—knife-edge trousers, shoes of glossy cordovan, silk shirt, cravat with its single blazing stone—stood at the corner of Perry and West Fourth. His face, under the shading of that hat, was dark, of a foreign cast, furtive, the eyes never still, but roving restlessly up and down and across the sidewalk, the street.

It was high noon of a warm summer day; the traffic—market-carts, delivery wagons, automobiles—streamed past the man in the soft black hat. But he had eyes only for the taxis, the limousines. Twice, as a heavy car had swung inward to the curb, he had stepped backward, his hand going to his pocket, eyes like coals beneath the shading of that shapeless black hat.

He glanced at a heavy gold watch, noting the hour with a quick, puzzled frown.

"Frisco said he'd meet me here by twelve," he muttered. "It's a quarter past now, an' that Kid Twister mob. I gotta watch m' step."

Denver Joe di Lupo's eyes narrowed with the slow, speculative stare of a falcon, a peregrine. He had made the appointment with "Frisco" against his better judgment. Kid Twister and his "mob"—this was their stamping-ground—and none knew better than Denver Joe that for him, at any rate, it was a No Man's Land of peril, the more real that it was hidden, obscure.

He glanced downward and across the roadway. A policeman, majestic guardian of the law, was passing with a slow, leisurely stride, the sun winking on the brass buttons. Joe relaxed for perhaps the tenth part of a second.

And in that flash of time, as the officer, turning the corner, presented his broad back, there came a sudden staccato clamor, roaring in the narrow way with a quick thunder, as a heavy car swung around the corner, careened, righted, drove level with Denver Joe.

Merged with the roaring of the exhaust there crashed suddenly a sharper thunder in a quick burst of pistol-shots. Lean, avid faces hung from the tonneau like the faces of wolves, the guns crashed almost in his face as the thing that had been Denver di Lupo sagged slowly to the pavement, head doubled grotesquely under his outflung arm.

The policeman swung slowly in a ponderous arc; he saw merely the silent figure on the asphalt, in the distance heard merely the roaring of the car, dwindling from less to less.

He came forward at a lumbering run as a second car, turning the corner on two wheels,

roared after the first, in it a man in plain clothes who, as he saw the policeman, flung out a hand, calling something that was lost in the clamor of the exhaust.

The policeman and the man on the sidewalk were left. The driver of the second car leaned forward over the wheel, then turned to the figure at his side.

"Just too late, Harvey!" he panted. "They work fast—but we'll clean 'em out. The chief wants me to break up Frisco Red's gang of crooks, and I'm going to do it now that he's riding a murder car and laid out his old enemy, Di Lupo."

For a moment the sergeant of detectives gave all his attention to the car, and it was needed. Then, as the car swung north into Hudson street, he turned sidewise a grim face.

"We've got the stuff now, Harvey: the men, the cars; you'll see; we never had a chance before. But they work fast."

But the handicap had been too heavy; even as they turned into the traffic lane at Forty-second they knew it was no use. But to-morrow was another day. Vinson turned the car slowly toward headquarters. Putting up the machine with a brief word to his companion, he went in for a moment with his chief, old Pat Haggerty.

The grizzled inspector of police glanced upward with a grimness which was belied by his warm hand-clasp.

"Well, Greg," he greeted, "you didn't make it—ha? But you will; you will." He leaned forward, his eyes under his pent-house brows, stern, resolved. "I'm leaving it to you, Greg; you've got the cars and you've got the men now—th' whole kit and caboodle of these strong-arms; you got 'em!"

Vinson spread his hands wide in a deprecatory gesture.

"I'll take the blame, chief, this time, anyway," he said in low tones. "But there's just one man, maybe two; if we could get one or both of them I think we'd have 'em all. You know how it is: there's always a *brain* of some sort behind these things; the man I'm after——" He hesitated for the merest second. "Well, I won't even mention his name, but *we* know. And I'm convinced, you know, this fellow isn't just a stick-up; he isn't a dope peddler, either, except at second-hand. But he's got a practical monopoly on every ounce of dope that's peddled here and elsewhere; his motor-bandit business is just a side line, of course. And he and that other guy—if there is another, I'm certain he's the key. And I'm going to handle this, if you'll let me, chief, mostly alone."

He paused, pacing restlessly from desk to door and back.

"I know we've got the cars now; they'll help if I need 'em, but——"

He sat down, almost immediately rising to his feet with a loose, easy movement. Gregory Vinson was not a tall man, although somehow he seemed tall. His shoulders were broad, sloping, the arms long with a wrestler's incurve at the elbow; he moved with a lithe, lifting, springy stride, carrying his hundred and eighty pounds with the quick ease of a lightweight. In his day Vinson had been an amateur boxer of repute; now, at thirty, muscle and mind and body, he was fit, with the fitness of the athlete always in training.

Something of this must have showed in the inspector's gaze, grimly admiring.

"Go to it, Greg," he said briefly. "You're right, you've got the right dope." He grinned fleetingly beneath the iron-gray stubble of his new-grown mustache. "You can do it."

The sergeant of detectives ceased his pacing. He extended a hand across the desk, meeting the blunt fingers of his chief with a long, strong clasp.

But, in the act to leave, the detective suddenly paused.

"That Denver Joe," he said slowly. "I have a hunch. I'm not certain, of course, but I think he was pretty close to the man we want. I think, too, that he may have been just a little *too* close. And it's my theory that"—he lowered his voice, breathing the name in a thin whisper—"that guy called Denver Joe to that corner to meet that car."

Haggerty nodded. Vinson turned, walking with his swift, silent step across the office to the door. At the door he turned with a wave of his hand and was gone. But even with his passing it seemed that there lingered in the still air the one word, spoken in that thin whisper and chill with meaning, the name of the man *lower down*:

"Frisco!"

CHAPTER TWO

A MAN sat at the window of a furnished room overlooking an alley, now dark and silent under a waning moon. From his position at the window the man could see the whole of the alley and the mews behind it.

For a furnished room in a cheap lodging-house it was a curious sort of room. The building had at one time been a warehouse; traces of this remained in the heavy iron shutters. These had been removed from most of the windows; in fact, they had been taken from the window of the room occupied by the man who sat there, but had been replaced just prior to his occupancy.

And the door of that room was heavy. It was solid oak, perhaps three inches in thickness; it locked with a huge, old-fashioned key, with the addition of a spring lock, one of those patent affairs which hold stronger under pressure.

The man who sat at the window might have sat for a portrait of incarnate evil; the face, the head like a malformed and pallid mask, the eyes mere slits, the mouth a steel trap, cruel as an animal's is cruel.

Frisco Red Masterman had won his way to the place which he now held by sheer dominant ruthlessness, even among those who were by nature ruthless as tigers, keen as wolves, merciless by trade and occupation.

Now he grinned faintly, as a wolf grins, as he fingered the newspaper in his lap. Denver Joe di Lupo had passed out, so ran the story, and it was just another killing for which justice must remain unsatisfied. Frisco Red could have explained it, but he did not choose to explain. And now?

Leaning from the window, his mouth tightened to a thinner line there in the darkness, something cold and hard rested upon the window-sill—the flat, black shape of the automatic thrust outward into the night.

Something was moving out there in the dimness; a blotch of shadow, it slid past the brick wall like a drifting wraith, crossed the yard, moving with the stealth of an Indian, halted just beneath the fire-escape, reaching its iron rungs to where, in the gloom, the man at the window waited.

"All set!" The drifting whisper reached upward, thin-drawn against the blackness. "Fourth and Charles."

A whispered growl answered him:

"Hinch?"

"Yeah—sure."

"Come up!"

There followed an interval while the shadow went upward swiftly, mounting the rungs with the ease of long practice. His face came level with the window-sill, an arm thrust out, and he was jerked inward; the window closed, the iron shutters drawn inward after it.

There came a snarling whisper from Frisco Red:

"You, Hinch, come clean! This Vinson, is he wise? Never mind about that Fourth street job; I want t' know. Wise me quick!"

Hinch stiffened, turning his pale eyes upon his questioner.

"He don't know nothin'," he muttered. "He ain't wise to a thing, Frisco. Th' bulls ain't wise to a thing, I tell you. I ought to know."

Goat Hinch, jackal of the underworld, go-between, runner, dip, "damper-getter" till thief), was Frisco's right-hand, or rather his left. And part of the power of this caliph of the crooks, known only as Frisco Red, came from the fact that Hinch, the devious, was a "stool," a crook, who drew this stipend from the department, turning in such information as he might have of jobs, "touches," the business of the underworld at his finger-tips. And it was mostly misinformation.

Untrue even to his associates, he was doubly a Judas because of it, and because of the fact that Frisco knew, and, knowing, kept him in a trembling servitude; he was a bond-slave, in very truth a jackal, serving Frisco well. Some day, perhaps—but the very thought that Hinch would turn upon him was—well, it was funny when you thought of it.

Frisco, for the merest fraction of a second, turned his back. Consequently he did not see the look in the pale eyes, for doubtless a worm can hate even if it cannot harm.

And Frisco was safe enough.

"Well, anything new, boy?" he asked, with a lofty condescension for him, turning again to the shambling figure, fierce eyes boring straight into the pale ones raised to his.

"Not a thing, chief," responded Hinch, his

gaze turned to the floor. "Well, guess I'll be goin'."

He moved, sidewise like a crab, to the window, opening the heavy shutters. Then, like a crab, he was over the sill and down the rusty rungs. Behind him he heard the window closing softly, the faint clang of iron against iron. Beneath was a well of blackness, so that, moving by feeling rather than by sight, he went downward slowly, inch by careful inch. Well, he must be almost at the bottom.

His foot, reaching downward slowly, abruptly stiffened. A hand about his ankle, in a grip of iron, plucked him from the ladder. A hand over his mouth stifled the strangled cry even as it was uttered. He felt himself lifted, swung, carried. Then he was thrown, like an empty bag, upon hard boards. There came the muffled purring of an exhaust, gears meshed, and the car roared onward through the night.

CHAPTER THREE

THE stool-pigeon lifted harried eyes to the huge man who bent over him, great fist upraised.

"I don't know nothin'!" whined Hinch. "I ain't done nothin'! Honest, mister, honest to Gawd, I ain't!"

It was Detective Harvey who had him.

And, after half an hour's grilling, nothing was the sum.

Meanwhile Vinson, whose assistant had followed Hinch to the rooming-house on Varick street, had made all speed thither, hope high that, by some turn of good fortune, he might find the man he sought, even at the outset.

It was hard upon one o'clock in the morning, and the short street lay deserted under a watery moon when Vinson, with four men in plain clothes at his back, went up the steps of No. 17.

That was the house, as Harvey had described it to them: a sinister house, brooding behind shuttered windows, within its heart how much peril unguessed at, and therefore the more deadly, Vinson did not know. Behind those shuttered windows and high door eyes might be watching them even at the moment, pistols leveled at them through the darkened windows.

Only the day previous a house in the West Sixties, a fort, a citadel, had been taken at heavy cost. Behind its walls a machine gun had vomited swift death at the attackers before a last desperate charge had silenced it.

Vinson had planted two of the men in the alley. Now, the two remaining at his back, he went up the tall stoop, eyes about him all ways at once. The street was dark and silent with the mystery and the silence of the small hours. Almost a death-like hush brooded over roof and chimney under the pale moon. One felt that hush as he feels the tension of a darkened stage, the sudden silence of the orchestra, the glow of the footlights, prelude to the play.

Vinson was not imaginative in the sense that he owned to nerves. To-night, however, he was conscious of a communicating sense of strain, of tension, like a fine wire drawn to pitch, and singing on a note too low for sound.

He bent, putting his shoulder to the door. It gave inward abruptly, so that he stumbled, recovered, his hand holding his gun coming upward with a jerk—too late.

There came a windy rush out of the blackness and a call:

"Th' bulls! Croak 'em! Now, let 'em have it!"

The blackness upon the instant was ripped from right to left with crash on crash; in that narrow hallway the echoes rose, bellowing, to the rafters, as the guns, unlimbered, roared out their message of death.

It seemed impossible that they could miss. But Vinson, with the first giving inward of that door, had fallen prone. Behind him, however, he heard, above the clamor, a groan—the sound a man makes when death has found him in the full tide of life. And in that moment rage, such as he had never known, possessed him. Full length upon the boards, as yet untouched, he emptied his service pistol to right and left, with the manipulation of a master, the heavy slugs ripping through flesh and bone with smacking thuds. Then, guns empty, he arose, leaping to his feet as a white, sneering face fronted him out of the murk.

He struck, with the full power of his arm, and the face was blotted out. Then he was among them.

Afterward they told of that fight in the house on Varick street, told of it with low voices and bated breath, as men will of that which is beyond them.

Vinson, his pistols empty, fought now with fist and foot. Twice he had felt the hot breath of a bullet sear his cheek; his shoulder burned where the passage of a slug had ripped through cloth and flesh. And then at his side he heard a voice, and his heart leaped, for it was a voice from the dead—the voice of Harvey, who he had thought was dead but a moment before:

"We've got 'em, Greg!" came the voice, and even with the words on either side the two who had followed him lunged forward to the attack.

For perhaps ten seconds it was touch and go. Death passed them by with the spitting crashes of the guns. A knife clanged, quivering, in the heavy door. Then, with a rush, there came a leaping onslaught from the stair: the two whom Vinson had posted in the alley.

It was soon over. But as Vinson, under the full blaze of the light, surveyed the sullen group of three who faced him his face darkened.

And suddenly he recalled that slinking rush the windy passage of the knife, the rapid patter of footsteps, echoing from less to less.

Frisco Red Masterman had made his getaway.

CHAPTER FOUR

GREGORY VINSON was pacing his private office, head bowed, struggling with a problem that at the beginning had seemed to promise a reasonably easy solution. But Frisco Red had disappeared as if the earth had opened and swallowed him. Clues he had opened up proved useless and worse than useless. Illicit traffic continued, seemingly without a guiding head. Stick-ups were, if anything, more frequent. He was turning to Harvey with a gesture of disgust and a

"Well, it looks like a blind alley; it does for a fact!"

There came a rapping at the door, and a uniformed patrolman entered, holding a note,

"Just came, sergeant, in the morning mail," explained the officer. "Take a look!"

Vinson examined it curiously. The envelope was dirty, as if it had been dragged in the mud. He ripped it open, glancing at the single sheet of paper, eyes widening in disbelief. It ran:

MISTER VINSON: You cum 32 Coenties Slip you fine out wat you want Vengeance she is mine I tell you quick. You cum Dutchman Charlies ask for the flying jib.

There was no signature save as the "flying jib" might be a signature, and Vinson knew well enough that that was thieves' argot for a man drunken and talkative. Dutchman Charlie's he knew well enough; it was a dangerous place even by day; it bore a bad name even in the department.

He stood silent a moment, chin between finger and thumb, considering. Then:

"By the lord, I'll do it, Harvey!" he exclaimed. "I'll go there! I can't overlook any bets. It may be a plant, possibly it is, but I have a sort of hunch that something will come of it."

"Better not, Greg," cautioned his assistant. "Even if you go heeled like a land pirate." He grinned out of the corner of his mouth. "You better watch your step!"

Vinson's jaw muscles tightened, an indication that he had made up his mind.

"Well, you can send in the reserves if you think they'll be needed, Harvey," he laughed. He straightened. "I'm going, and I'm going now, and I'm going alone."

He turned, walking toward the door. It closed behind him with a hollow crash. He was in the street. But as he went briskly on his way he did not see the face, lean, predatory, the forward-thrusting head of the creature who followed him through the press, stopping when he stopped, moving when he moved, gliding, as it seemed, almost like a wraith invisible, like a hound who follows his quarry, to be in at the death.

It was not a very long walk from the station to the address given in the letter, and presently, after perhaps twenty minutes of time, Vinson was turning into the narrow street at the

corner of which there stood the combination dance-hall and saloon of Dutchman Charlie.

There was the usual noise and movement in the narrow way: bargaining of street peddlers in their native patter, shrill clamoring of children from underfoot—the hundred noises and sights and smells of a district harboring as many tongues and races. In the distance the passing rumble of an "L" train came in a diminishing echo of clamor. But as he proceeded the detective with an instinct that was ingrained thought to sense a subtle undercurrent, a shading, a sound within a sound.

But it was not a sound; rather it was like the echo of an echo or the hushed diminuendo of a register so low that only hearing of more than human keenness would have noticed it.

To the detective it appeared that this vague shadow of clamor preceded him, before him and behind. He felt it about him, this curious undertone, like the faint beating of surf leagues distant.

Abruptly he felt it behind him, and now it seemed risen to a distinct sound, like a rushing tide of thunder heard, as one hears in memory the dim bars of a song.

And suddenly he knew.

Out of the tail of his eye, casually at first and then with a keener interest, he had seen in the jostling crowd faces here and there, etched for a moment in bold relief—faces wolfish, predatory, vicious beyond all imagining.

He had been walking in the centre of the street, which in itself was nothing remarkable in so congested a thoroughfare. But as he went forward he sensed a movement in the crowd, an increasing pressure, a sudden, strange converging of its ceaseless milling, as if at a silent signal.

To make certain of this he tried, half-heartedly and then with thrusting arms and shoulders, to make a way for himself, either to right or left. But each time that elastic barrier of shifting bodies seemed interposed between him and his objective, and with an art in which design was less apparent than accident.

Vinson grinned mirthlessly as realization came to him there in the crowded street. He was being herded like a steer, whether he would or no, but whither? Not once had he glanced behind him, but now, with a quick, instinctive intuition, he cast a brief look over his shoulder. In that breathless instant he saw Frisco Red Masterman.

About him the air seemed to vibrate with a veiled menace; behind him he felt the pinions of the Dark Angel perilously close. Before him and on either side the wolves were closing in. He was trapped, snared, and by the simplest kind of strategy.

But he remembered what he had come to do. The words of Chief Haggerty seemed written before him in letters of flame, words of doom he had thought them for Frisco Red.

"Go to it, Greg; you can do it."

Now it appeared that he would pay the penalty. But Gregory Vinson was not of the mettle that shrinks at the dark face of danger. The crushing impact of a heavy slug between his shoulders, like the blow of a giant hand, the sudden "snick" of a triangular knife-blade at the base of the brain, for these at any moment he was prepared. But while there remained a fighting chance for his life he would take that chance.

It was like the strategy, but on a larger scale, of a daylight stick-up that had been pulled off not five days previous on Broadway at high noon. There, in the heart of the financial district below the "Dead Line," with the lunch-hour crowd filling the teeming streets in a dense tide, a man had been pushed, jostled, crowded against a plate-glass show-window and calmly "frisked for his poke."

The usual indifference, or perhaps lack of initiative of the crowd, had helped of course. In that hurrying throng the victim was as helpless as if he had been alone in a midnight alley, cut off from his kind at elbow touch by a "mob" numbering perhaps half a dozen men.

Now here in this stronghold of the clans, the gangs, the tongs, Vinson was practically as helpless as had been that human fly pasted against the plate-glass window.

But the detective was resourceful, with the wary cunning, the desperate, cold courage of the cornered grizzly. Now something, too, of the heritage of his fighting forebears stirred in his veins in a cold fury of lightning decision added to the instant co-ordination of eye, brain and hand.

He had not again turned his head since that brief, flashing glance which had disclosed to

him the dark face of Frisco Red. He had come opposite Dutchman Charlie's; that much he could see over the heads of the mob hemming him in. And then his gaze, everywhere at once, yet not seeming to be aware of the jostling, the rising tide of menace that flowed everywhere about him, saw an opening in the crowd, a lane, a sudden space between him and the curb.

Upon the instant he acted. The long, loose muscles, ripping like steel springs beneath his heavy bulk, tensing, hurled him in a resistless avalanche of crushing impact into and through the living barrier.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUDDEN it was, and as such it was successful. Charging low, head down, he scattered the men before him, hurling them to right and left in his headlong rush, using his shoulder like a battering-ram, his elbows, his head, himself a projectile, bewildering, crushing, overwhelming by the abrupt fury and surprise of his attack.

Oaths arose behind him as he won clear to the sidewalk, emerging from the press like a football player from a scrimmage, the ball under his arm and a clear field to the goal. And his goal was Dutchman Charlie's.

As the impetus of his charge carried him into and through the swinging doors, a running figure, stooping low, broke off from the crowd. It was Hinch, the stool, turning and doubling like a fox. Vinson, out of the corner of his eye, saw him go, cursing him under his breath. It had been he, then!

Behind the detective now there sounded the dull crash of automatics, the high whine of the slugs, the "tsung" of splintered glass; a flying splinter of wood raked his forehead. Running figures, curiously stooping, converged upon the saloon. One in advance, a short man with bowed legs, rushed in at a side door, automatic in hand, as the detective, gripping his heavy Colt, burst inward through the swinging doors of the main entrance.

Behind him, however, curiously enough, there was no pursuit; oaths, imprecations merely, the growling chorus of an inarticulate hate. It was as if, their purpose accomplished, they waited to be in at the death.

But if Vinson was as good as dead, within him at that moment life flamed to its highest, its keenest. Every sense, strung like a fine wire to its fullest pitch, responded instantly and superefficiently to the message of his brain, clear, keen, alive in that crowded moment of frightful peril.

But the headquarters man, even as he burst through the swinging doors, dropped to his hands and knees a split second before a ragged burst of bullets tore through the space his body had just left.

And now there began a struggle that could have but one ending: death, swift, certain, sure.

In one comprehensive glance his eyes swept the long room up and down; the bar empty now.

The foreground was a No Man's Land of fresh sawdust, evidence of hasty flight in the overturned chairs and the half-filled glasses on the tables. Before him, sinister, snarling for his blood, was the wolf pack, six to one, supremely confident, their guns spitting a vicious stream of lead. And between them and the detective there lay the fresh sawdust.

But as Vinson went to his knees, his arm, reaching, had drawn toward him a massive table, behind which he crouched like an Indian, and, like an Indian, of a sudden, through the flat bark of the automatics, his heavy Colt roared out its message of death.

It had all happened so swiftly—the confident, almost careless entry of the gunmen, certain of their prey. But the unlooked-for strategy of the detective had put them at a disadvantage. For, before they could hunt cover, death sought them; as by a magician's trick the iron table interposed an impenetrable barrier to their fire. Even as they halted, irresolute, in that vital second, a slug from the .48 drilled through the foremost, whirling him off balance to a slumping fall.

Again the service pistol crashed and found its billet.

Vinson was shooting to kill, but by this time the remainder of the gunmen had gone to earth behind a rampart of tables in a welter of glasses and broken bottles. Wine, red as blood,

dyed the sawdust to crimson. Then abruptly a shrill clamor arose from without.

They were coming: the mob, the gang, Frisco's mob; above the intermittent crashes of the guns voices, hoarse, raging, roared and bellowed:

"Kill th' cop. Croak 'im. Sap th' bull!"

Thus went the savage chorus, but as yet it was only a chorus, a threat. Within the saloon the gunmen might have overwhelmed Vinson in one desperate charge. But they did not think quick enough to do it.

Speech, broken, disjointed, pattered from them in brief gutturals, snarling advice and counter-advice, together with an occasional burst of challenge at the detective:

"Come out an' take it, Vinson. Show some nerve. You damn cop—we got you, an' we got you good."

And among them, crouching in the background, was Frisco Red Masterman.

Of a sudden, following a brief lull, they saw a miracle. Before their eyes the heavy surface of the iron table rose, swung, balanced, came toward them in a slow, inexorable advance, the staccato bark of the automatics blending with the spang of the bullets upon it and all around it.

In desperation they directed beneath it a plunging fire, but the shots went wild. Panic seized them; a common impulse overcame them. They rose, reckless of concealment, crowding together, their backs to the wall, near them the swing doors of the side entrance.

Then, as they halted for one fateful second, came the charge; the heavy table rose as if on wings, swept through the air, crashed into them like the bursting of a shell, flattening them into the dust, all but one.

Panting, fighting for breath, the deetctive leaned uncertainly against the wall, swaying. His hand, holding his gun, dropped at his side as there came, pouring inward like a flood, a rush of men, guns out, clubs in hand—the reserves.

Roughly they hauled from beneath the table-top the bruised and battered gunmen, dragging them, limp, white-faced, outward to the "hurry-up." Others turned to Vinson as he sank, white-lipped, to the flooring.

The battle was over. But the one whom they had sought, whom Vinson had sought, had again eluded them. Frisco Red Masterman, the venomous boss of the underworld, had vanished.

CHAPTER SIX

THE meaning of a clue is simply a thread. Sometimes it turns and twists, and sometimes, if you follow it far enough, you will find the spider who made it.

But Gregory Vinson had to admit that it had taken him merely into the midst of battle, had given him a tantalizing glimpse of his quarry, and then had mocked him with the shadow for the substance.

But sometimes little things, insignificant things of themselves, but bearing weightily upon the matter at hand, point the way.

Vinson, walking on an afternoon of brilliant sunshine, perhaps a week following the desperate shambles at Dutchman Charlie's, stumbled, literally stumbled, over something that brought him up short with a muffled cry: "The devil!" exclaimed the detective, turning his head as if he expected to see his satanic majesty leering at his shoulder.

For the thing that he had seen was indeed a clue, because it was a thread—a thread of ashes—in a thin film upon the sidewalk at his feet. And following that thread, it took him to a half-burned cigarette, in itself nothing extraordinary.

But Gregory Vinson had recognized that cigarette; he knew it from the size, the shape. It was not necessary for him to scrutinize it, for the peculiar device, worked upon it in gold leaf, told him that he was hot upon the trail.

And that, too, was not merely a figure of speech, for the cigarette was as yet alight; it lay smoldering at his feet.

And a trail of ashes, faint but decipherable, led upward to a stone stoop and a house boarded up, silent, tenantless, or at least it was so in outward seeming.

Vinson had recognized the cigarette as one of a brand particularly affected by Frisco Red Masterman, and it was not entirely chance that had brought him to where he had found it, lying on the sidewalk in front of a very re-

spectable dwelling house in the West Seventies.

Hinch, as it appeared, had not, after all, set that trap at the Dutchman's; as a matter of fact, he had telephoned headquarters. And it was this same Hinch who, under cover of night, and stimulated by an unusual indulgence in his particular vice, had come to Vinson at his house; come in by the back way, like the alley cat he was, furtive, shaking, but with the venom of a great vengeance burning in his deep-set eyes.

But after all he could but point the way. This he had done, but it had remained for Vinson's ability to add two and two and sometimes find it five to follow the thread across two states, turning and doubling barkward to the city and the sidewalk in front of No. 77 West 84th.

The detective rubbed his chin, standing like a graven image above that smoldering cigarette. The ash-trail was plain enough, but nobody but Vinson would have observed that detail. Near him, slowly pacing the length of the long block, he saw the looming figure of a patrolman—Pat Clancy, as it chanced. And he and Clancy had been, were old friends.

The detective, turning, sauntered slowly toward the officer until well past the purview of that house. Then his steps quickened to a run. A hand on his shoulder made the policeman whirl like a boy, for all his girth, his hand going to his locust.

He grinned sheepishly as he beheld the detective's face.

"Well, an' what good wind has blown ye here, me boy?" he asked heartily, face sobering instantly, however, at the expression in Vinson's eyes.

The sergeant of detectives spoke crisply in short, staccato sentences:

"Now listen, Pat! There's a man in there, or at least I'm morally certain he's there, and you've got to help me get him out! He's a bad egg, a rough customer, Pat, but we'll smoke him out this time, or I'm a Dutchman!" He grinned a moment fleetingly between stiff lips. "Smoked out; that's good, but listen, Pat. I've put salt on his tail—or ashes; it's all the same. He's"—he lowered his voice to a tense whisper—"Frisco Red Masterman!" he ended.

The patrolman stiffened.

"Th' divvle ye say!" he ejaculated slowly. "But how——"

"That's just it," cut in Vinson swiftly. "I'm not absolutely certain he's there *now*, of course. But he has been, and only a little while ago, if he's not there now. And we have a little time, not much, if he *is* there, to get him. Who owns the house?"

"Professor Leyendecker, th' chemist, biggest in the profession; I guess he's got quite a collection of stones, too; perhaps that's what Masterman was after. But he's away for the summer, or—no, he *does* come back now and again. He has a laboratory in the back, just above th' alley—th' delivery street, you know."

"Now, Pat," again interrupted Vinson, "just one word. I'm going in! Have you a key? You have? Good. Let me have it. Thanks. Now I'm going in. You get Hartmann from the corner. There he comes now. He's a good husky. Put him in the alley, then you come back here hell-bent, and in with you—ha?"

But Clancy had turned, and Vinson could not restrain a grin at the spectacle of caution he presented, walking stiffly, afraid to run lest he be seen, as it might chance, by the watcher in the house, if there was any one there.

Vinson went up the steps with the air of a man with nothing to do and plenty of time to do it in. But before inserting the key in the lock of the wooden outer door he bent his eye at the keyhole.

The next instant he was bolt upright, had set the key in the lock. For the face that he had seen through that narrow opening had been his own, reflected from within by an *eye gazing into his!*

CHAPTER SEVEN

WITH the key in the lock Vinson knew exultation and then a corresponding anxiety. For, even as the key turned, he heard, above its rattle, the rapid pad-pad of retreating feet.

Then the door swung wide, but even as he rushed in, gun out, there came the barking roar of an automatic from the alley.

In the midst of his disappointment and chagrin the detective waited a moment in a tense and fearful expectancy for that answering shot.

It came, and his heart leaped to know that Pat was uninjured. The next instant he was in full flight along the hall, behind him the thunderous pounding of the brogans of Clancy.

They burst together down the service stairway, and so, from a small postern gate set into a wall, into the alley. And there——

Vinson heard Clancy's voice:

"Th' perfessor; he's been here!"

Then everything seemed to happen at once. A man was rushing toward them, a man in uniform; Vinson recognized him as Hartmann, Clancy's partner. He waved an arm, his speech thick, hurried, as, turning as one man, they saw, from the alley's mouth a great green roadster leap outward and away.

Vinson fired with the motion, but the car kept on, turned the corner on two wheels, righted, the cutout roared like thunder into the avenue and was away.

Another car stood just below. Vinson, Clancy and the crestfallen Hartmann clambered aboard, Vinson at the wheel. And as they went Hartmann spoke jerkily, biting his words off short:

"He—came out—just as I got there. He threw his gat—almost in my face—missed—yes—by a mile—but mine struck."

His voice trailed off, his face a mixture of disgust and self-condemnation.

Clancy spoke:

"Th' two cars are both th' perfessor's when they're both here. Thot means he's at home, but he's probably stepped out. He told me something about 'em some time ago, but I can't just remember."

"Unless—you don't think——"

Hartmann left the question in the air.

"——Masterman killed the professor?" jerked out Vinson. "I don't think so. But now we've got our work cut out. Pat, have an eye to the traffic. Right. Here we go, and the devil seize the hindmost!"

Clancy, watching the dial of the speedometer, saw it rise steadily from 40 to 50, then to 60, 65, 70. And there it hung while, driving like a fiend, Vinson, as by a miracle of skill, skirted corners and shaved by taxis, pedestrians. In a moment, as it seemed, they had left the city proper, whirling out onto that broad, level boulevard skirting the river and the heights.

For far ahead, as the car swung around a turn preparatory to a long stretch of straightaway, they saw their quarry—a black, moving streak. Then it was gone.

Clancy, his eyes straining ahead along the road, gave a slow headshake.

"We'll never make it. It's no use!" he said with finality.

"Well, and why not?" queried Vinson, the words blown back on the wings of the gale made by their headlong flight.

"Because he's got the faster car; I know ut," explained the policeman. "An' because it's not that, neither; it's th' fastest car inside fifty mile of any in the neighborhood. Eighty is nothin' f'r it. No, it's no use."

The detective, face grim, made him no reply. By now they had left the boulevard, whistling downward past the railroad tracks, and on up, up to the main highway stretching for a hundred and fifty miles northward to the capital.

Vinson had managed to coax a roaring seventy-five out of the racing motor; the car hummed and vibrated like a foundry, lurching with the pace, hitting the high spots, soaring like a swallow at the thank-you-ma'ams, taking the curves as a bicyclist takes the banked turns of a racetrack.

Now, once again, they had a sight of that flying car far ahead, a mile at the very least. Abruptly Clancy stifled a quick word in his throat. Then he gasped:

"Greg—Greg, that car!"

"Yes?" asked Vinson, without turning his head, peering into the wind that roared down upon them and away.

"Why, why"—Clancy's tones were solemn, awestruck—"that car, if he ever skids, if he sideswipes another, even, it's good-night."

"You mean," asked Vinson with a sudden interest, but the words were a shout, "you mean——"

"Why, th' perfesser, he makes explosives, you know, and he was takin' it—I remember now; that's what he was tellin' me; he had to be *that* careful; he *left it in the car!*"

There followed a sudden silence, so that they seemed to leap forward in a vacuum of the wind of their passage.

Five miles ahead, and driving southward at a racing gait, there was coming a great, gray touring car, in it certain furtive-eyed men, hunched forward, staring straight ahead. And the man they sought was coming to meet them, coming on the wings of death.

These were the insurgents, the rebels, the "mob"—Frisco's mob that had been—and when they would meet Frisco Red Masterman six guns would roar, the emperor of the underworld would have had his day, another would rule where but lately he had lorded it over strong-arm and yegg, dip and burnee snuffer.

They were coming, and so was he.

And where the road runs between hedges of larkspur, where meadows on either hand are starred in early spring with marigold and heart's-ease, a long, lonely stretch, with no human habitation within a mile on either hand, they met.

The gray car whirled, turning as its occupants opened fire. Masterman, driving at eighty miles an hour, fell forward over the wheel, limp. The green roadster smashed, head on, into the gray.

Two miles in the rear Vinson and the policeman heard it: the shattering crash of the explosion; saw, even ere the echoes had rolled back from right to left, the darkening cloud, like a pillar of fire, rise upward to the morning.

Frisco Red Masterman and his mob had passed.

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PYTHONS EASILY TAKEN

IN the Malay Peninsula quite a little industry has recently sprung up among planters and others whose business takes them into the jungle.

The snakes used for the purpose of making shoes are mostly pythons, and these are usually caught by coolies in the ordinary course of their work or on expeditions specially organized to search for them.

The python has a beautifully marked skin, is easy to capture, and attains a great size.

The coolies are paid so much per foot for live specimens, dead ones being useless, as the reptile has to be skinned immediately after it is killed to obtain the best results.

All that is required to effect the capture of even the largest of these snakes is a forked stick, a noose and a stout pole.

When he sights his victim the coolie approaches and places the forked stick behind the back of the head and pins the reptile to the ground. A noose is then slipped over the head and the snake usually most obligingly winds itself around the pole and is carried back to more civilized quarters, where it is sold to the "curer."

Pythons are most voracious feeders, and if found, as is usual, after a meal, may be handled with impunity.

Occasionally, however, a very different customer obtrudes himself upon the scene—the King Cobra. The contempt felt for the python quickly gives place to the extremest caution when facing one of these deadly inhabitants of the jungle.

The King Cobra attains a length of from 15 to 20 feet, and will attack a man without provocation. It is seldom caught alive, as the skin is valueless, but I have seen one caught in the way I have described. This specimen was 17 feet in length, and it took three men to carry it. If a man is bitten by one of these snakes, death results within 10 minutes.

Strange tales are told by natives of pythons from 60 to 70 feet in length that have been known to devour a rhinoceros, but they may be taken as legendary.

Jungle pigs, however, frequently fall victims to the python, and I was recently told by a Malay that he saw one in the jungle with a medium-sized pig half-way into its mouth.

Eastern Snake-Charmers

By PERCY B. ST. JOHN

THAT the snake-charmers of antiquity possessed a secret mode of fascinating serpents, which has passed down to their successors of the present day, both in Egypt and India, there seems to be no reasonable doubt. Certain authorities declare that the various tricks with serpents performed by the Indian jugglers, however terrible in appearance, are by no means as dangerous as they seem, inasmuch as the jugglers always take the precaution to deprive the snakes of their fangs and the poison glands, which lie beneath the tooth, in which the venom is contained. It is certain, however, that the fangs and poison vessels are not always removed, and that in some manner, whether by the influence of music or otherwise, the Indian jugglers have the power of attracting the venomous serpents which swarm in the hot climates of the East.

The snakes usually selected by the musicians, whose profession it is to exhibit their power over these reptiles, are of the species known in Europe by the name of cobra di capella, or "hooded snake," the most deadly of the serpent brood. They are carried about in baskets, and the exhibitors, like the little Savoyards with hand-organ and monkey, earn a subsistence by their performances. They play a few simple notes on the flute with which the reptiles appear to be greatly delighted. As the music proceeds they keep time by a graceful motion of the head, rising in coils from the ground, and following the notes they love with gentle waves, like the undulations of a swan's neck. With the cessation of the music they relapse into a sort of lethargy, and appear motionless, but must immediately be covered up in a basket to prevent their springing on the spectators. Forbes, the celebrated writer, one day devoted an hour to the painting of a fine cobra di capella which was kept dancing the whole time upon a table. Not doubting that its venomous fangs had been previously extracted, he frequently ventured to handle it while admiring the beauty of its spots, and more particularly the spectacles of its head, from which it derives the name sometimes given it of "spectacled cobra." The next day his Mohammedan servant, going to the bazaar, observed the same musician amusing a number of simple country people with his dancing snakes. As was usual on such occasions, they formed a circle around him and sat down on the ground. Suddenly the tremendous reptile, irritated either at the music's stopping too abruptly or from some other unknown cause, darted among the spectators and, fastening on the throat of a young woman, inflicted a wound of which she died in agony in half an hour. The same musicians who exhibit these performances likewise charm all kinds of serpents, even the huge boa-constrictor, from houses and gardens where they lie in wait to spring upon the inmates.

The Hindu juggler performs various tricks with serpents. Being invited to come to your house and give an exhibition of his skill, he produces a bag, which he first permits you to examine, and then throws, apparently empty, upon the floor. He mutters some mysterious words and charms, with various gesticulations, when the bag begins to be agitated from within, and after a few upheavals of the sackcloth, out crawls a full-grown cobra, five or six feet in length, which, rearing itself up and erecting its hood, looks through its spectacles as much like the devil as possible. At the bidding of the juggler the snake again returns to the bag, which, after being agitated for a short space, appears again to be empty, and upon examination the snake is found to have disappeared. The writer himself has seen this trick performed, with feelings of no very agreeable sort, nor altogether free from serious appre-

hensions as to his own safety. In Hindustan serpents are regarded as genii, or guardian angels, and are often invoked under the endearing appellations of father, mother, or brother. The ancients thought that there was something divine in these reptiles, and the cobra makes a conspicuous appearance in Hindu temples.

The poison of all serpents is much of the same chemical constitution. The danger from snake-bite varies directly as the dose of the poison, and the larger the snake the more dangerous the bite. The rattlesnake bite is rarely fatal. The cobra is more so, not because it possesses a stronger poison, but because of its larger size and the speed with which it accumulates poison in hot climates. The poison of the bee or wasp is very powerful; people have died from the infliction of a great many stings at once. It may, perhaps, be supposed to be quite as deadly a poison as that of the snake, since so microscopic a quantity as a single bee is armed with can produce such painful effects. Snake poison kills by annihilating in some unknown way the source of nervous force, reaching the nerve centres through the circulation. If the poison enters a large vein life may be destroyed in a few seconds. Absorption takes place so rapid that it was formerly supposed of some of the more active poisons that they acted by the transmission of a shock through the nervous system, and it is by no means certain that such may not be the case. After a person is bitten by a venomous snake there is an immediate and copious effusion of blood along the fang track, violent pain in the part bitten, and hemorrhage of black venous blood, the latter being probably nature's method of getting rid of the poison. These symptoms are sometimes accompanied by vomiting. An effect is also produced upon the blood which is not altogether understood. The red corpuscles are destroyed, and the blood becomes fluid and refuses to coagulate. When a person is mortally bitten by the cobra di capella, molecules of living "germinal" matter are thrown into the circulation, and speedily grow into cells, and as rapidly multiply, so that in a few hours millions upon millions are produced at the expense, as is supposed, of the oxygen absorbed into the blood during inspiration. Hence the gradual approach of coldness, sleepiness, and death. This germinal matter feeds upon the fibrine and oxygen in the blood, which thus becomes disorganized, and nothing is found after death but dark fluid blood, the fluidity indicating its loss of fibrine and the dark color its want of oxygen.

Certain individuals among the Indians pretend to possess the power of curing the bite of venomous serpents by a method peculiar to themselves, and which they will not impart. By these means it is stated, upon the best authority, that many natives have been recovered from a desperate state after being wounded by the cobra without being touched by the physician who performed the cure or taking any medicine internally. This science, if there is anything in it, is little short of the miraculous, and seems to have no affinity with that of the ancient Psylli or modern snake-charmers, but rather with that professed by Mesmer and his disciples. Savages in various parts of the world are familion with certain vegetable poisons, and are said to possess knowledge of antidotes for snake bites. But, despite the wonderful stories of travelers and explorers, it is not to be conceived that ignorant savages should have arrived at results which all our knowledge of chemistry and botany has been unable to attain. There is no known antidote for snake poison. It is vulgarly supposed that whisky is an antidote, but it is merely efficacious to support temporarily the nerve force. Men have been known to die who were bitten when dead drunk.

Snake-catchers say that harmless snakes suffer from the bite of poisonous reptiles, but that poisonous serpents are unable to harm themselves or each other with their poison. It is, indeed, quite certain, and has been proved repeatedly by scientific experiment, that the poison of the cobra is powerless to injure one of its own species, or any other venomous serpent. A great number of experiments were tried by Doctor Farrer upon dogs, fowls, and rabbits, by applying the cobra fangs, or those of other venomous serpents, and watching carefully the effects produced. A ligature being fastened around the leg of the animal, so as to entirely strangulate it, and check the circulation completely, the cobra is made to fasten his fangs upon the limb. Despite all the remedies known to science, and notwithstanding the

ligature, enough of the virus makes its way through the strangulated tissues to the heart to cause death inevitably within a period varying from fifteen minutes to an hour. In the case of the fowl or rabbit its action is quicker, inasmuch as the rapidity with which a poison acts varies directly as the rapidity of the circulation.

A small amount of prussic acid injected into the jugular vein of a horse will cause death in ten seconds, while a rabbit will give up the ghost in five—just the time it takes the blood to pass from the jugular vein to the carotid artery. The effect of a snake bite upon fish has also been tried with fatal effect. The only methods known of counteracting the effects of a snake bite are by ligature and cauterization, assisted by alcohol to sustain the vitality and nervous forces. The natives of India have "snake-stones" of some porous material, which, being placed upon the wound, are supposed to suck out the poison.

The great enemies of the cobra, krait, and other poisonous serpents in India are the snake-eating cranes and the peacock. The latter will fearlessly swallow a cobra of the largest size, just as the cobra in its turn can swallow whole another monster scarcely less in size than himself, for these fearful animals possess the virtue of preying upon one another. The mongoose, an animal of the lemur tribe, is also a dreaded enemy of the cobra, and it is said by the natives that if it receives a wound from the serpent's tooth it will hunt up a vegetable antidote and, returning to the attack, will eventually vanquish the snake.

CLEVER CHINESE BEGGARS

THE Chinese beggars as a class are veritable humbugs. They know how to make the most of their disabilities.

There are among their number those who suffer from really terrible afflictions, and these they do their utmost to flaunt before the public.

A few weeks ago, for instance, in one of the minor thoroughfares a visitor was appalled to see the figure of a Chinese, half clad in an oily kind of dilapidated cloth, lying on the ground.

Both legs were gone, and his only method of locomotion was to roll himself along the muddy road (not the pavement) like a barrel.

It was a most pitiable sight, but it did not excite the sympathy nor, indeed, the curiosity of the numerous other Chinese in the street.

He had a tin basin beside him which he would thrust about a yard ahead of him, so that when he again rolled, his face would reappear beside this receptacle.

Poor fellow, if he could but catch the eye of a likely contributor he had a ready smile for him!

Just how many miles he could do in a day one could not tell, but he seemed oblivious to traffic of every kind.

His, however, was a genuine case, deserving of pity.

Far different was the arrant rogue who, with a carefully concealed bottle of bullock's blood, at intervals bedaubed himself till he looked positively gruesome.

He gave the impression of being in a most horrible condition, the possessor of wounds requiring instant medical attention.

A little later the visitor met a couple of women who were carefully "made up" for their parts.

The younger was merely clad in the regulation tatters, but the elder woman, the "star" performer, started off with the unusual asset of a fine head of gray hair.

This hair had been disheveled to the last degree, and it hung about her in pitiable confusion.

In China old age is regarded with great reverence, and her part in the drama, in order to elicit sympathy, was to kneel down on the ground, let this gray hair flow in all directions, and revolve her head in the mud of the road.

At first sight one was inclined to think that she was nothing but a poor, discrepit old granny, of at least 80 years, but at a closer view her lively actions made one wonder whether the gray hair was not really a part of her stock-in-trade.

One in Ten

by

Joe Mills

HARTLEY tilted his chair back against the wall and held a lighted match musingly before his face; he watched the flame slowly work its way toward his fingers, and at the last possible moment touched it to the tip of his cigar.

"You were speaking of secrets!" he said to a group of detectives ranged against the wall in positions of comfort like his own. "Well, I guess everybody has more or less of them concealed from public gaze. But it's my bet that if we picked out ten men at random and shadowed them a while, and dug into their past and present tense and intenses, that we could get something on every one of them. It is only a matter of time and patience."

The group of men thus addressed sat silent for a full minute. They smoked and considered. Then a gruff fellow at the far end of the line challenged the statement. "I say, Bill, you've got a heap of confidence in your fellowman. To hear you talk a stranger would think it wasn't safe to stir about alone; in spite of what the chief stated in the papers yesterday about this town being cleaned up as thoroughly as though 'Old Dutch Cleanser' had been on the job?"

A hearty laugh followed the big man's words. There was more of humor than of opposition in his tone, and his allusion to their chief carried more meaning than the mere words conveyed.

Detective Hartley joined the laugh. The offhand banter by the big man was apparently idle of intent to gouge; it was a part of their daily time-passing while waiting for a call. But Hartley was interested in his statement, and for that reason he continued: "I'm willing to back my idea with real cash if any one wants to get thrifty and collect." He paused and searched the line of smoking men, giving each face a quick glance to see if more than passing interest was betrayed. It was the end man, the big fellow, who called the bet.

"I'll lay a twenty that you can't get a thing worth while on any of the ten people we pick out," and the speaker brought his chair back to four legs with a ponderous slam. "Here's the secret of success," he added as he crackled a fresh, crisp twenty-dollar bill in his fingers.

All eyes went to Hartley. But he matched the twenty, thus evading the laugh that waited. "Well, I suppose I'll have to do the work myself," he stated slowly; "can't trust any of this bunch to help with research work." And he eyed them sharply.

"Guess if you'd researched that guy that tangled your feet the other night and got away you'd be about in our class." The waiting laugh came with a roar.

"Well, I'll set a time limit on this bet." Hartley got to his feet, his air of indolence gone. "I'll get something worth having on at least one of the ten, and if it's worth my while I'll get something on the whole bunch," he ventured, with a quick look at the big man who had put up the twenty.

"Who's goin' to do the pickin'?" demanded an interested listener near the middle of the line.

"There's where I've got the say," Hartley decided swiftly. "I'm willing to stand for a fair deal, but no select bunch of 'innocences abroad' for me. I want the common run of folks—plain people. Won't stick for seeing them beforehand, either. Tell you what I'll do. I'll go up to the corner of Broadway, and at six o'clock pick out at random some one from the crowd. I'll set my back against the wall so I can't see who's coming. Then when the clock in the tower strikes the first tap I'll take whatever sort of person it's my sentence to follow as number one. You can send up any one you want to have a look at what I draw. Then you can't claim afterward that I stacked the cards and had the goods on them before I singled 'em out."

"Gosh, Bill, you'd have us thinking the whole world was crooked," defended a man who had listened to the proceedings without speaking before.

"No, you're wrong," another voice protested. "Bill just wants to show us what a real detective can do when he wants to."

"I think I'll mosey along with you," stated the big fellow, who was financially interested in what was to happen.

There was the usual crowd jamming the crossing, and it was evident that to pick any particular one at the stroke of six would be difficult. But the big man was equal to the necessity. "I'll stand with my back to the crowd, Bill, and when the clock strikes I'll reach back and grab the fellow that's nearest. Is that fair?"

Bill Hartley agreed to the big man's proposal, and they stood together for a few minutes, watching the crowd and waiting for the clock to strike the hour.

Overhead in the tower the clock boomed one, the big man shot back a hand and closed his fingers tightly upon the arm of the nearest person. A scream followed—a feminine scream, and the girl whose arm the big man had caught turned pale and seemed near to fainting.

A moment later the crowd had swallowed Hartley and his first trail. The big man stood with his back against the wall. "Gosh," he chuckled, "guess Bill didn't get a very likely 'suspect' for the first one."

The girl shot quick glances over her shoulder as she hurried away. Plainly she marked the big man, but Hartley, who was close beside her, remained unnoticed. He was an atom of the crowd, active, alive, interested. A few seconds later he was close behind the girl, and as they surged along with the crowd he made a quick census of her values, estimated her character, and guessed at her occupaion. He was surprised at her beauty. "Well," he muttered softly to himself, "I'm glad I didn't draw a lemon for the first one."

It was to an unpretentious part of the city that the street car carried them. The girl got off with quick alacrity and walked rapidly to a three-story brick boarding house. She entered without looking back, and Bill Hartley had a feeling that his first quest was to be fruitless. But he was a man of habit. He had to be. Many times when all his faculties had told him he was on a false scent he'd kept on, and saw the thing through because he had been trained to work that way. The girl in this case was pretty, and that was enough. He could be entertained for the evening at least. And after all that would not be so bad. Much better in fact than sticking around headquarters and having every member of the force jibe at him about his lost prisoner. He grinned good-naturedly and rang for the landlady.

"Looking for a permanent place," he explained to the landlady; that was why he was so particular about his neighbors. The landlady, who was keen of eye as well as obliging when prosperous boarders appeared, showed Hartley a number of rooms. They were on the top floor inspecting the smallest, cheapest rooms of the house when a door opened and the girl he was trailing emerged. She gave the landlady a brief nod and went downstairs to supper. Hartley engaged the room next to hers.

As he had nothing to conceal, Hartley

passed his real name to those nearest him at the supper table. The girl, sitting next, took scanty interest in his name or in him. She talked little, ate daintily and went upstairs befor dessert. But she was not nervous.

Hartley climbed the stairs with weary tread as though his day had been long and hard.

Hartley opened the girl's door by mistake, and seeing no one walked in. He felt certain that she was there. But his quick glance around the dimly lighted room did not discover her. Boldly he switched on the light.

"Stand right there! Keep your hands still!" The command came from behind. The girl had been concealed in the clothes closet. Hartley stood still. Defiantly he struck a match and lighted his cigar, but did not turn around. Though he was not scared, he was thoroughly surprised and trapped as neatly as ever in his life. He had felt secure in the fact that the girl did not suspect him, and for that matter he had not suspected the girl. On the contrary, he had placed her above suspicion. But now, well—he wondered what was coming.

Very deliberately he turned. The girl was seated in a low chair. The shaded light shed its rosy glow over her features, much to her advantage. He was astonished at her radiant beauty.

"Put your gun on the table." Her voice was low and even. Hartley obeyed.

"Now step back and face the wall." Again he did her bidding.

The girl stepped forward quickly and snatched the gun. "Now sit down," she ordered.

"So you came in his place, did you?" the girl demanded bitterly. Hartley could only stare.

"The coward!" went on the girl. "Why didn't he come as he promised?" Hartley slowly shook his head. He was surprised and interested.

"Well, it's just as well he didn't, because I meant to kill him." She was growing hysterical.

"Dad wouldn't sign the deed, so we had to dope him. But I got it after all. The land's worth ten thousand. It was awful out there on the farm. First time for me in ten years." She shuddened and buried her face in her hands.

Hartley watched her shoulders rise and fall, his quick sympathy surging up. He had come as a jest, but he'd stay as her champion, no matter what her trouble was.

"He's promised to marry me before, and now he's forced me to get a deed to the home place. Well, he'll marry me or I'll never sign it away. It's made out to me—see." And she thrust the paper into Hartley's hands.

The door swung open and a slim, youthful man slid into the room. The girl forgot Hartley and flung herself into the visitor's arms. Hartley guessed the identity of the new arrival. It was the old, old story to him; he could read such happenings like a book. The girl from the country who'd been sent back home to get whatever property she could claim, and the city crook thriving on her ignorance.

Hartley jerked his gun from beneath the paper and covered the astonished young man. He searched him, slipped on handcuffs, and asked the girl to accompany them to headquarters. He had been mighty lucky, and he hoped that a certain big man would be at the station when he came in with his prisoner and the pretty girl.

The patrol motor set them down at headquarters, and Hartley ushered his couple to the sergeant's desk. "Book this fellow for——" But he stopped abruptly. The sergeant was biting savagely onto a cigar, and his eyes were fixed upon something at the rear of the room. The detective turned.

Very quietly a number of plain-clothes men had filed into the rear of the room. And when Hartley turned they sent up a roar of laughter. "Great work, Bill, old boy," approved the big man who had posted the twenty.

Hartley glared. Even his prisoner was laughing, and the girl was near to hysterics again.

"Say, Bill, you've done caught the chief's new additions to the force. We thought we'd like to know their secrets before they went regular. And you sure have——" But Hartley cut him short.

"Framed," growled Hartley, and strode out of the room.

"Better come down and run down the other chances," taunted the big man as he sent up a roar and stood fingering a pair of crisp bills.

The Twenty-Dollar Plates

By DAVID T. BROWNE

PART II

CHAPTER FOUR

DAVILIA was astir bright and early next morning, and before opening his place for the day's business he deemed it prudent to serve "Bull" Helion with breakfast and a newspaper, if he was able to read, to break the dull monotony of confinement in the small room.

He found the fugitive up and dressed, impatiently waiting for his food. "Mornin', Boss," he mumbled to the saloonkeeper. "Gad! It was a tough night. I had all sorts of dreams of coppers at my neck. Mighty glad it's morning."

"You ought to be thankful you're not cooped up in a cell this blessed second. Them coppers as was here last night weren't satisfied. They had a man on guard watching the place all night," grumbled Davilia; "you had better lay quite low until the affair blows over, if it ever will. A cop's croaking is something that don't fade quickly, especially if the guy happens to be a Secret Service bull. Say, pard, how did yer come to do it?" Davilia's tone expressed much curiosity, which Helion did not fail to notice.

"I guess I kin tell you without fear," chuckled Bull. "You see, me and a cupla friends o' mine decided we needed some extra jack, an' as we found it pretty hard to get the *real* stuff, we decided on making our own by counterfeiting."

Davilia started. Eagerly he listened to every muttered word of the fugitive. "Well," the latter continued, "ef I do say it myself, I'm a pretty slick trick at turning out the queer; in fact, I was so darned good that it took the fly cops from Washington to detect anything. First thing I knows they're down on top of my joint, and in the excitement I just naturally had a hankerin' ter plug one of 'em, an' I did it."

A strange light passed over Davilia's face. He experienced mingled emotions of eagerness, fear and doubt. He seemed to be debating a question with himself. If Bull Helion noticed this he gave no heed.

"In the excitement," he concluded, "I managed to make my get-away, and first thing I knew I thinks of my old side kick, Dick, who told me to come here if I ever got in trouble. 'Bull,' I sez to myself, 'yer better hide mighty quick, 'cause yer liable to be pulled in any minute.' So I comes here, and here I am."

"Have you got any samples of the queer you made?" asked Davilia eagerly.

For an answer Bull shoved his hand down his trousers pocket and drew out a roll of bills, which he straightway passed to the saloonkeeper for inspection. Davilia examined them with the careful scrutiny of an expert. Indeed, it would take an expert to tell them from the national currency, so cleverly were they executed. Again Davilia's eyes lit up brightly.

"You're a find," he breathed softly. "I'm beginning to feel thankful you had enough sense to come here last night. Did you design the plates for these yourself?"

"Certainly," answered the fugitive promptly, "and mighty hard work it was, too. And to think that bulls got away with them plates. But never mind. When things have quieted down a little, I'll be able to get to work again. Somehow I seem to have a knack at making these things so that they pass more easily than others. What do *you* think of 'em, boss?"

"They are fine," said the saloonkeeper. "In fact, they look so like the real stuff that they can hardly be told apart!"

"What did I tell you?"

"For instance, take this good bill I have here, and compare it with yours. I'll change

'em around somehow, and then see if you can tell me the good one."

"Sure," smiled Helion. He took the two bills in his hand, and for three whole minutes examined every part of each one. Then he raised his head quietly and gazed at Davilia with a little smile forming around his lips.

"Listen, boss," he said quietly. "You may or may not have known it, but *both these bills are bad!*"

Davilia arose quickly to his feet. Long and earnestly he gazed at the man before him, and then finally, as if making up his mind definitely, he said:

"You're right, Bull; they're both bad. I knew it all along. I wanted to see if you were as good as you pretended to be. I'm convinced."

"Thought you'd be," opined Bull, without moving an eyelash.

"Listen," continued the saloonkeeper, "I'm going to let you in a secret. You won't be able to leave here for some time yet, and I think you are just the man I need. But before I tell you anything, promise that you'll never tell a single soul anything you may hear or see here. Is it agreed?"

"Yes," the answer came quickly and without hesitation.

"Well, here goes. My keeping a saloon is just a blind to throw the bulls off the track. Maybe you wonder how I came by that bill. Perhaps you think I printed it myself. Well, I did! And there's many more being printed downstairs. Our plates, however, are beginning to smooth down, and we need new ones. Are you willing to enter this game with us and take a share in the profits? It would be to your advantage to do so, and I think you won't regret it. What's your answer?"

The fugitive arose and faced Davilia with outstretched hand. His reply was brief and concise.

"It's a go!" was all he said, but it lifted a heavy load off the shoulders of the pseudo saloonkeeper.

CHAPTER FIVE

"FOLLOW me," said Davilia tensely, "and be sure to make as little noise as you possibly can. I am going to show you our outfit."

The other nodded acquiescence.

For the first time since he entered the room the night before the fugitive stepped out into the hall, following in the footsteps of the other. They progressed still farther down the hall, when Davilia stopped suddenly and pressed a spring hidden under a loose board in the floor. For the brief space of a second nothing happened. Then a slight rasping noise was audible. A panel slid back, revealing a massive iron door, which he hastened to unlock with a key he carried in his pocket.

On being opened it disclosed a steep flight of stairs, which was lost at the base in blackness.

Davilia began to descend first, cautioning Helion to remain where he was until he could switch on sufficient light to enable him to see ahead clearly. When a few dim lights flared up the fugitive had a glimpse of a stone cellar floor littered with many and different-sized scraps of paper. On descending to this floor he found himself in a large, high-ceilinged, water-proof cellar. Here and there a few electric bulbs were discernible, a fact which somewhat surprised him, for the saloon was illuminated only by gas. This, he thought, was another blind.

Far back against the wall were two monstrous hand-presses.

Several men were gathered about with shirt sleeves rolled up to the elbows, all intent upon their lawless task. Davilia and his new accomplice walked over to them.

"Hello, chief!" greeted one of the man. "These plates won't last another edition. In fact, I don't think you should attempt to pass these twenties, because they do not look as clear as the last batch we made."

Davilia looked gloomy for a moment, and then remembering Helion, curtly introduced him to his helpers.

"This fellow here's quite an expert," he said. "Show him the material, and I think he will be able to help us out beautifully. Here are a few of his samples."

The three others left the machine for a moment to glance at the specimens. A loud whistle of amazement escaped them, for more perfect banknotes they had never seen.

"Have you the plates these were made from?" asked one eagerly.

"No," said Davilia, answering for him. And then he told the story from the beginning. When the three heard he had killed a Secret Service man they regarded him with more respect.

"I'm only sorry you didn't make a job of it, Buddy," said one; "them guys are always butting in when you least expect it. But it's their own fault if one of 'em croaks now and then. They got no one to blame but themselves."

"Let's get down to business," suggested Davilia. "Bull, do you think you could set to work right away, or do you want to inspect the machines first?"

"I think I'd better look 'em over, boss," answered Helion; "they may be a little different from the ones I used."

"Well, give 'em the O. O., but start just as soon as you can. We're running short of queer."

With a nod Bull began his inspection of the machines. After watching him for a few minutes the men came to the conclusion that he was certainly no novice. He handled the various levers so confidently and managed to manipulate the machine itself so successfully, that each man congratulated himself upon having so valuable an addition to further their interests.

Davilia had already gone upstairs. It was a clever disguise, this idea of establishing a saloon to cover up his lawless undertakings. True, indeed, the place had often been raided, but not because of the doings that took place in the cellar. Revenue officers suspected Davilia of bootlegging, but he was far too wary to give them any promising clue that might lead up to a fatal discovery. On the whole, he considered himself quite safe, and never burdened himself with useless anxiety. A customer entered. Davilia recognized him as one of his regular hangers-on, who always was willing to give a startling piece of news for a drink.

"Well, Marty, what's new?" It was Davilia's usual greeting.

"I've been trying to pick up as much information as I could about this dead copper. I hung around headquarters all day, and, believe me, they are pretty close about the whole thing. Even the press only knows that a fly cop was shot dead. But listen, boss; what's it worth to know this dead guy's name?"

Under ordinary circumstances Davilia would not have cared one way or another what the name of the dead officer was. But as matters stood, he was more than anxious to acquire as much data pertaining to the case as he could. So he made his bid.

"A good shot of booze, Marty. Come on, out with it!"

But Marty refused to "come out with it" until he drank his whisky. Then he leaned over the bar and whispered into Davilia's listening ear:

"Harry Coleman!"

A long-drawn whistle of profound amazement escaped Davilia. For Harry Coleman was known to be one of the most talented members in the service.

CHAPTER SIX

"BULL" Helion soon ingratiated himself with the counterfeiters by his profound skill. He was working on a ten-dollar plate, which, so far, had met with the approval of all concerned. He asked for a little privacy in order that he might work better in engraving the finishing touches on the plates.

Days fled swiftly. Davilia began to get impatient for the task to be completed, and urged Helion to hustle up a bit, so that they might get another batch of spurious money in circulation.

One day, when Helion had been with them a little over a week and was thoroughly cognizant of every secret entrance and exit in the place, Davilia drew him aside.

"Bull," he said, "one of my men has been injured. One of the gang, I don't know just which, neglected to turn off the electric switch, when something went wrong with the machine a half-hour ago. The result was that this injured man, thinking the power had been turned off, touched a charged wire. He's in a serious condition, and needs medical assistance. I know it wouldn't be healthy for you to leave here, so I guess I'll have to go myself. Another thing, I'll leave you in charge, for you seem to be a sort of leader among the men,

anyway. I guess you're one of them born leaders, as they call 'em. Anyway, I've spoken to the big boss. Oh, don't look surprised. I'm not at the head of this business. There's another person, nameless for the present, who directs us. Knows almost everything the Secret Service plans to do. Great fellow that. Well, I've spoken to him, and he says he'd like to meet you. I expect him down any day now, so you had better hurry up with those plates. I want to show them to him."

With that he was off. The injured man was upstairs, pending the arrival of an ambulance. Davilia had a good story of his own making in case he was asked any embarrassing questions.

While he was gone Helion got busy with the plates. He withdrew to his private section of the cellar, and for fifteen minutes all that was audible was the scratching of a graving tool as it traveled swiftly over a smooth metal surface. The men were busy at the presses, but careful examination of one of the bills drew from them disappointed remarks. The old plates were now utterly useless. It was at this crucial moment that Helion ventured forth, holding a square metal surface in his right hand. He advanced to the disheartened counterfeiters and tendered it to one of them.

"They're done at last," he said; "now we'll see some swift developments!"

They took the proffered plate and glanced at it closely.

"I declare, Bull," said one, "you have absolutely no peer in your profession. Why, these are the best plates I've ever cast eyes upon. Boy, you'll make us all rich!"

Helion stood by, and although he said nothing, it was easy to see he was pleased with the compliment.

The plate was adjusted to one of the gigantic presses, the motor of which hummed incessantly as if anxious to get to work. "By the way," said Helion, "when is the bigbug expected to pay us a visit. Davilia said he was coming soon, though he did not say just when. What sort of a guy is he, anyway?"

"You'll like him," one of them opined, "and I'll be greatly surprised if the feeling isn't mutual."

"Next Saturday at eight sharp, although Davilia don't want it let out. If that guy was ever pinched, it would cause no end of trouble!"

"But he won't be pinched if he has any sense, and I know he has," said another. "Hasn't he been in the business these past five years, and never yet was caught with the queer? That's a record to be proud of, ain't it, Bull?"

Bull agreed that it most assuredly was, and without more ado the four bent over the press, which was now beginning to turn out spurious bills. Never was imitation more like the real. Everything's presented to the eye, the perfect, genuine bill. The series number, the portrait, the engraving of the signature, all were strikingly like the genuine. The men were elated beyond words, and continued to turn out the bills, one after another, until a hundred or more had been printed. Then the massive iron door at the head of the stairs opened slowly, in response to Davilia's pull on it, and footsteps were heard descending. The saloonkeeper was just returning from the hospital, but he was not alone. There was another man with him. He was the big chief of the whole enterprise, the one of whom Davilia had spoken.

(*To be continued in our next issue.*)

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"He Who Laughs Last"

by

Harold F. Podhaski

"WARD DETECTIVE DENNIS O'LEARY glanced at his watch and noted, with a considerable degree of satisfaction, that it lacked only five minutes of twelve. He was off duty at midnight and the thought was consoling after eight grinding hours in an icy, drizzling rain. There are some who contend that a police detective's life is an easy one, but if any person had been so indiscreet as to pass that remark in the presence of Dennis O'Leary this particular night he would have fared badly indeed. For it is anything but pleasant to stamp for several hours through dark and narrow streets in a factory district on a cold November night with icy particles of rain lashing your face like a whip every step that you take. Even the thought of it is discomforting, so it is not to be wondered at that O'Leary, glancing at his watch, should be gratified to note that the end was in sight.

There was a patrol box at a corner two blocks beyond, and O'Leary, quickening his pace, started toward it, intending to phone his final report to the station. Thence he would hurry downtown in time to catch the 12:20 car that would carry him home. And that is precisely what would likely have happened had O'Leary not stopped for a moment in the middle of the block, removed a cigar from beneath the lining of his cap, and attempted to light it. For Fate, taking advantage of this trivial incident, picked him up by the scruff of the neck and plunged him into the midst of an adventure.

Thrice did he endeavor to light his cigar, but each effort proving ineffectual, he finally stepped back under the shelter of a convenient doorway where the rain and wind would not be so likely to interfere with the operation. And then, just as he was about to strike another match, he saw, or thought he saw at least, a white, ghostly face peering out into the night from one of the windows on the opposite side of the street. He was sure of it, in fact, though he caught only a fleeting glimpse of the face as it was pressed against the pane. Then it disappeared into the blacker background beyond.

For a moment or two the detective stood there, staring at the window where he had seen the apparition, wondering if his eyesight could have played him false. But evidently it hadn't, for, as he watched a green shade was slowly drawn down over the window.

The building on the opposite side of the street was a small one, occupied by the Continental Manufacturing Company, and that any

person could have legitimate business in the offices of that concern at 12 o'clock at night of course was not to be thought of. So O'Leary, inwardly cursing the fates that had conspired against him, crossed quickly over to investigate.

Along one side of the building ran a narrow driveway, and treading softly that he might not attract the attention of the midnight marauder inside, he made his way along this drive seeking for some means of entrance to the building. He had proceeded scarcely more than a dozen yards when he came upon a door, the knob of which, very much to his surprise, responded readily to his touch. He opened it and quietly entered what appeared to be a long, narrow hallway. Then, closing the door behind him, he examined the lock with the aid of his flashlight, and found that it had been very neatly picked.

For some moments he stood there in the darkness, listening intently. Outside the rain had stopped for the moment at least, and for some reason or other there seemed to be a peculiar cessation of immediate sounds. He was about to move on along the hallway when suddenly his attention was arrested by a faint tapping noise that appeared to emanate from the other side of the wall at his left. He waited for the sound to be repeated, heard it again presently, and then began to feel his way cautiously along the wall. A few yards of this and he reached a door that evidently opened into the offices at the front of the building. It was from beyond this door that the sound of the tapping appeared to come, and he stood there for a time listening, his ear glued close against its panels.

Slowly, softly O'Leary began to turn the knob of the door. Then, opening it a few inches, he peered through the crack into the room beyond. A street light just outside the building shed a brilliant glow through one of the side windows, and over in one corner of the room in a direct line with his vision he could plainly see a dark figure kneeling on the floor in front of a small iron safe. Even as he watched he heard the tumblers click softly into place, saw a white hand reach out, grasp the handle, and slowly draw open the heavy metal door.

As quietly as possible Detective O'Leary widened the crack in the door until it was large enough to permit the passage of his body. Then, without attracting the attention of the kneeling figure, he tiptoed softly into the room and stood watching for a moment just inside the door. The situation reminded him of a cat playing with a mouse before it pounces to destroy, and he smiled as the thought occurred to him. To catch a thief like this red-handed, a safe-opener at that, was something of an achievement, and it is not to be wondered at. therefore, that O'Leary should spend a brief moment gloating over the coup he was about to pull off.

There was an electric light button in the wall just beside the door, and he reached toward it, at the same time drawing from a holster beneath his coat a long-barreled and decidedly dangerous-looking revolver. In another instant he had pressed the button, flooding the room with a golden, yellow light. Whereupon Dennis O'Leary received one of the greatest surprises of his experience as a ward man.

The figure kneeling before the safe in the corner of the room was that of a girl—a frail-looking girl of perhaps nineteen or twenty, who might have been pretty were it not for the death-like pallor of her face.

The discovery took O'Leary so utterly by surprise that for a moment he could only stand there staring at the girl in petrified amazement. But if the officer was surprised the girl herself was a great deal more so as she faced about and saw his figure standing beside the door. The effect it had upon her was startling. She arose slowly to her feet, stood swaying back and forth like a drunken person, and then fell fainting into a crumpled little heap on the floor.

Now, as every one knows, an Irishman is generally a kind-hearted chap, and Detective O'Leary was no exception to the rule. Years of experience as a city patrolman and detective had brought him into contact with crooks of every kind and description, but this winsome, pale-faced girl was no such a one as he had ever seen before. In fact, she looked like anything else in the world but a hardened criminal, and while he knew quite well that appearances oftentimes have a habit of being deceitful, still there was something about her that made it very hard to believe she could

really be a crook. Strange, indeed, that he should feel that way about it, having caught her red-handed in the very act, but somehow or other he couldn't help it. The sight of her crumpled figure lying in a pitiful little heap on the floor was enough to melt a heart of stone, and as there was nothing granitic at all about the heart of Dennis O'Leary his sympathies were instantly aroused.

He quickly replaced his revolver in the pocket beneath his coat, and crossing the rom, he stooped down beside the still figure of the girl and picked her up in his strong young arms. In another moment he laid her gently down on the leather cushions of a small settee, whereupon he fetched a glass of water from a nearby cooler, and forced a portion of its contents between her lips.

It was some little time, however, before the girl began to show any signs of returning life, and the detective was beginning to think that it would probably be advisable to summon aid, when she finally opened her eyes and looked dazedly about the room.

"Are you feeling better now?" he kindly inquired.

She stared at him intently with big, childish eyes. At first she did not seem to recall what had happened, but memory came back presently, and without replying to his question she buried her face in her arms and began to cry softly. Big, heartbroken sobs like those of a child who has lost a favorite toy escaped her pretty lips.

"Come, come, my dear," O'Leary protested, as he bent over and patted her gently on the shoulder. "This won't do at all, you know."

She looked up at him again, her eyes streaming, her lips quivering with the emotion she felt. And O'Leary, as he looked at her, saw how young she really was, how utterly helpless. She seemed scarcely more than a child. For the life of him he could not understand it. It was unbelievable that an innocent-looking girl like this could really be a thief. Still, he *had* to believe it, for he had the evidence of his own eyes to go upon.

Some intuition must have told the girl what he was thinking about, for she sat upright on the settee and began to talk rapidly, earnestly, a pleading note in her voise, in her eyes a mute appeal that was almost irresistible. And O'Leary—soft-hearted, kind-hearted Dennis O'Leary—listened and believed. Somehow he could not help it.

"I—I know what you are thinking," she began. "You—you are thinking that I do not look like a thief. Of course, after what has hapened, I—I can't expect you to believe anything else, but, honestly, I have never done a thing like this before in my life. I—I never will again. If you only knew why I did it you would not blame me. I am sure that you wouldn't."

A still, small voice whispered into O'Leary's ears and warned him that he'd better not listen to this sort of talk.

"Don't be a fool," said the voice. "She's only trying to work on your sympathies. Better call the wagon and lock her up while you've got the chance."

He hesitated a moment and looked down at the girl, into the pleading eyes that were upturned to his. There was sweet innocence in those eyes, he thought, and nothing else.

"Yes, I will admit that you certainly don't look the part," he said finally, and then as an afterthought added: "At least you don't look like a regular thief. None I've ever seen, anyhow. Still, duty is duty, you know," he went on after a moment. "I'm sorry, but of course I'll have to take you down to the station. Nothing else I can do under the circumstances."

"Wait!" she cried in a panic. "Listen to me just a moment. Let me tell you at least what made me do this terrible thing. Surely there can be no harm in that. I—I don't care for myself; it isn't that. There's some one else—my mother. It—it will kill her when she finds out."

She began to cry again, hysterically this time, and the detective, who had never had much experience with weeping women, felt rather more like a brute than an honest ward man who would only be doing his duty if he locked her up forthwith. Once more he bent down and patted her gently on the shoulder.

"Oh, come, now," he protested. "Please don't feel so badly about it. If it'll help you any, why, go ahead and tell me what made you do it. I can't promise that'll make any difference, though. You understand that, don't you?"

"Yes, I understand, of course," she replied, recovering her self-control with a visible effort. "Still, if you've any heart in you at all it *will* make a difference. I did this thing to save my mother's life. She has not been well for a long time, and yesterday morning she had a bad fall. When the doctor came he said there was only one thing that would save my mother's life, and that was an operation by a specialist. But we are very poor and haven't the money to pay for such an operation. I went to this specialist yesterday afternoon and told him about it. I begged him on my knees for his help. He refused to perform the operation unless the money was paid in advance—three hundred dollars. What was I to do? I had no idea in the world where I could secure such an amount. Well, I thought about it for a long time, and finally decided that to save my mother's life I would become a thief. I knew that there would be several hundred dollars in this safe because I work in this office, and to-morrow is pay day. They always bring the money from the bank the day before and lock it in this safe overnight. So I came here to steal, as you know. You may not believe that I am telling the truth, but I swear that I am. I can prove it to you if you will let me do so."

There was a ring of truth to the way she told it, and O'Leary could not help but believe her. Still, crime was crime, regardless of the motive behind it, and his own duty was very plain. Yet he hesitated, for while duty impelled, in the depths of his big kind heart there was nothing but pity for this frightened wisp of a girl. If she could really prove to him that her story was true, but there was time enough to think about that after she had.

"Young lady," he said finally, "if I did the thing my duty demands I would take you right to the station. But somehow your story gets under my skin, and besides you certainly don't look like a crook. I—I have a mother myself, and I guess there isn't much I wouldn't do for her. I won't promise what I'll do about it, but—well, if what you have told me is true, we'll talk about that part of it later."

"It isn't that I expect you to let me go," she sobbed, her eyes streaming with tears. "But I told you what the doctor said about my mother's condition: that she would surely die unless the operation was performed. And of course there can be no operation now. I only ask you to let me go to her. If you don't I will probably never see her alive again. Please. It isn't much that I ask. You—you needn't let me out of your sight for an instant. I just want to see her once more, to say good-by before she dies."

O'Leary believed the girl's story, and believing, he could not, of course, refuse such a request.

"Very well," he told her. "I'll take you to your mother. If it turns out that you are really telling the truth, I'll do more than that. I'll take the law into my own hands, and forget what happened here to-night. I oughtn't to do it, I know, but I—I can't help it."

Before he could draw back she had seized one of his big brown hands in her own and was covering it with tears and kisses. Gently he disengaged it, and bending down helped her to her feet.

"Come, my dear," he said kindly. "Tell me where you live, and I will take you there."

She gave him a distant address, and a few moments later they were in the street outside the building. Reaching the corner, two blocks beyond, the detective unlocked the patrol box, reported everything quiet, and was marked off duty by the sergeant at the other end of the wire. At an all-night garage farther down the street they obtained a car and were presently speeding over the wet, slippery pavement toward the west side of the city.

It was after one o'clock when they finally arrived at their destination, and O'Leary found himself in a district of narrow and dirty streets, a part of the city evidently peopled by the poorer classes. He drew up at the curb in front of a house to which the girl directed him, a two-story frame building in a block of other dwellings exactly like it.

The officer helped her out of the car, and followed her along a rickety wooden walk that led to the porch. Producing a key from one of the pockets of her coat, she unlocked the front door, and Dennis found himself in an ill-smelling hallway, at one side of which an oil lamp burned in a bracket, shedding a dim, ghostly light between the narrow walls. At the end of the corridor a flight of stairs led upward to the second floor, and toward this

the girl made her way, O'Leary following close at her heels.

There was another hallway at the top of the stairs with two or three doors on each side of it, and outside one of these the girl stopped, softly turned the knob, and pushed open the door. They entered a small room, in one corner of which stood an iron bed. An oil lamp was burning on a table near by. Beside the bed stood the figure of a man looking down at the pale, wrinkled face of an old woman O'Leary could see outlined against the white pillows. At the sound of their entrance he faced quickly about, and as he caught sight of the figure of O'Leary he stared at him for a moment in surprise. Presently, however, he turned toward the girl.

"Mabel, where in the world have you been?" he asked gravely.

"Why, doctor, I—I told you I was going to see a friend whom I thought might lend me the money for mother's operation," she replied. "I came back as soon as I could. How—how is she, doctor?"

"Immediately after you left she suffered a relapse. I did everything I could to keep her alive until you came, but God willed otherwise. Your mother died, my dear, just a few moments ago."

For some time the girl did not move. She stood rigid in the centre of the floor, staring with tearless, grief-stricken eyes at the silent form on the bed. Finally she crossed over and stood for a moment looking down into the white, wrinkled face. Then she knelt beside the body, and burying her face in her arms she gave way to her grief.

Dennis O'Leary, watching her, felt a great pity in his heart for this unfortunate girl who had sacrificed so much. And what a pity that her sacrifice should have been in vain! He glanced at the white-haired figure on the bed, then back at the girl kneeling on the floor beside it, and waited to see no more. Quietly he tiptoed to the door, opened it, and passed out into the hallway. The doctor, listening, heard the sound of his step as he went down the stairs, heard the door below as it was softly opened and softly closed.

And then a most remarkable thing happened. The figure on the bed sat bolt upright, removed from its head a white wig and threw it onto a chair near by. The girl kneeling beside the bed rose to her feet, took from her hand bag a package of cigarettes, selected one, and lighted it. Then the doctor tore off his beard and tossed it carelessly into a corner of the room.

"Well," said the figure on the bed, "I'm glad that's over. How'd you happen to get caught, Mabel?"

The girl with the childish blue eyes briefly related the circumstances.

"And to think that poor fish had his mits on one of the best little safe-openers in the game and didn't know it," laughed the pseudo doctor when she had finished her story. "Mabel, I'm proud of you."

"I'm rather proud of myself, Mac," she assured him boastfully. "To tell you the truth, though, I think we'd better move on to the next burg. We've worked our little stunt three times now in this one, and I don't think we'd better risk it again. How long have we been here now?"

"Seven months. To-night makes the sixteenth safe job you've pulled, and the third time you've been caught up. Once it was by a watchman and twice by the cops. But we've been ready for just such an emergency every time. The hardest-hearted bull in the world would fall for that line of stuff you give 'em, Mabel. You look the part, too. All you've got to do any time one of 'em picks you up is stick to that yarn. Bring 'em here to prove you're telling the truth, and we'll do the rest. Show me the fly cop that would take a girl like you away from her dead mother to lock her up. We can stay on here a couple more months at least without taking any chances. After that we'll move on."

"If they were all as soft as this boob was to-night we could stay forever," said the girl called Mabel, smiling at the memory of her experience with O'Leary. "Say, he was certainly a poor fish."

The erstwhile doctor laughed and seemed about to agree with her when there came a sudden and unexpected interruption—the sound of a voice from the corner of the room.

"Oh-hó! So that's it, eh? A poor fish, am I?" queried the voice. "Well, I may be; but he who laughs last, you know, laughs best."

All three faced quickly about in startled surprise. Just beside a door leading into one of

the adjoining rooms stood the burly figure of Wardman O'Leary. None of the three had heard him as he softly opened the door, and their astonishment could not have been more complete. In one hand he gripped the butt of his long-barreled revolver, and the look in his eye gave promise that he would not hesitate to use it.

"First time I've ever seen a corpse smoking a cigarette," he went on grimly. "Still, funny things happen sometimes. For instance, who'd ever take an innocent-lookin' kid like you for a crook? One of the best little safe-openers in the game, too, eh? Well, you won't be opening any more safes for a while, Mabel."

The childish innocence was no longer apparent in the blue eyes. There was venom in the glance she shot at the detective.

"No, I don't suppose I will," she agreed, with a bitter little laugh. "What gets me, though, is how you caught on. Mind spillin' it?"

Without removing his glance from them, O'Leary stepped to the open window and blew several shrill blasts upon his policeman's whistle. Almost immediately there came the sound of running feet, and two patrolmen came into view beneath an arc light at the corner beyond. He blew again, and they hurried down the street in the direction of the sound. Keeping an eye on the group near the bed, he leaned farther out the window and called directions to them as they approached the house.

"No, I don't mind spillin' it, I guess," he finally said, turning toward the girl as he heard the two policemen coming up the stairs. "I just happened to notice that the so-called corpse was wearing a wig, so I decided to investigate. When I was going out the door I happened to see that buzzer up there in the corner. I suppose you pushed some sort of a button while you were unlocking the door downstairs so they'd know up here that you had company with you. That would give them the necessary time to get set for the little tableau.

"After I had gone downstairs and opened the door to make you think I had left, I sneaked up again and went into this next room. That's all there is to it."

The pseudo doctor swore and the erstwhile corpse followed suit.

Mabel of the childish blue eyes puckered her lips into a sickly looking smile.

"And to think," she declared, "that I had the nerve to call you a poor fish."

O'Leary laughed; laughed last.

MANY GAME BIRDS BROUGHT FROM ORIENT

HUNDREDS of Oriental game birds from China and Mongolia were included in the cargo of the *Eldridge* when she docked at Seattle, Wash. The birds and a rare mountain sheep were brought here for the Department of Game of this State.

An absolutely new bird is the bamboo partridge, of which 500 were shipped. It is from the marshes of China and these will be turned loose in the Puget Sound district. It is larger than the "Bob White" and smaller than the Hungarian partridge, but is very fast on the wing. They possess brilliant coloring. About 250 Chinese pheasants of several strains from the northern and colder parts of China were in the shipment. Twenty-five pairs of spectacle ducks and mandarin ducks were brought. These will be taken to the game farm at Walla Walla and propagated. They are beautiful ducks and are expected to do well in the lakes and waterways of the Northwest.

The shipment included a Thibet ram from the borderland of Mongolia and China. It lives at an elevation of 12,000 feet and is one of three in captivity. The other two are in London. The State Game Department hopes to secure a female.

For the Seattle Zoo 200 canaries were brought and a large number of reed birds or tiny grosbeaks. Among the bird cargo for the Park Department were three white Japanese storks. These very grave-looking birds will live in a beautiful fairyland of rustic bridges and cobble temples in Woodland Park. The stork exhibit is the work of Japanese mechanics and is the facsimile of Oriental gardens.

Moles

THE body of the mole is cylindrical and compact; the snout prolonged and pointed; the limbs very short; the anterior pair presents a thick contracted arm, terminating in broad and solid paws, with five fingers scarcely divided and armed with strong flat nails. The shape of these scrapers, for such they are, gives them an obliquely outward position, and facilitates their use as scooping instruments, by which the soil is not only dug up but thrown backward at each stroke, and that with great energy. These hind limbs are small and the feet feeble in comparison with the anterior scrapers; while the body tapers to them from the chest and shoulders, so the hind quarters offer on impediment to the animal's progress through its narrow galleries. The fur, moreover, is such as best befits a subterranean dweller—it is extremely close, fine, short, and smooth, and resembles the nap of black velvet. There is no external couch to the organs of hearing, the sense of which is acute in the extreme; a simple auditory opening, capable of being closed or dilated at pleasure, leads to the internal apparatus, which is effectually defended from intrusion of particles of earth and sand. At a cursory glance the mole appears to be destitute of eyes; they are, however, not wanting, though very small and buried in the fur. When we examine the osseous and muscular development of the mole, we find a perfect correspondence with its external characters and the perfection of its senses.

The subterranean labors of the mole are exerted in the accomplishment of very different objects. Each mole may be said to have its own district or manor, its hunting-grounds, and its lodges; and this ground is traversed by high-road tunnels, through which it travels from one part to another, all branching off from a central fortress—its ordinary residence, which is, however, not only distinct, but often remote from the chamber in which the nest is made and the young reared. We will begin by describing the fortress, or ordinary domicile. This fortress is constructed under a hillock of considerable size (not one of those which we ordinarily see, and which, thrown up every night, indicate its hunting excursions). This hillock is raised in some secure place, where a high bank, the roots of a tree, or the base of a wall, afford protection. The earth forming this mound is well compacted together, and made solid by the labors of the architect; and within this firm-set mound is a complex arrangement of galleries and passages of communication. First, a circular gallery occupies the upper portion of the mound, and this communicates, by means of five descending passages, with another, and with a gallery at the base of the mound, and inclosing a larger area. These passages are nearly at equal distances.

Within the area of this lower gallery is a chamber, not immediately communicating with it, but with the upper gallery, by three abruptly descending tunnels, to ascend to the top gallery, and from that descend into the lower gallery. This chamber is the dormitory of the mole. From the basal gallery opens a high-road tunnel, which is carried out in a direct line to the extent of the manor over which the individual presides, and from the bottom of the central chamber a passage descends, and then sweeping upward joins this main road at a little distance from the hillock, so that the mole can enter the high-road; eight or nine other tunnels are carried out from the basal gallery; they are of greater or less extent, and wind around more or less irregularly, opening into the high-road at various distances from the hillock; these irregular tunnels the mole is continually extending in quest of prey, throwing up the soil above the turf, through holes which it makes for the purpose, and which form the ordinary mole hills which we often see crowded thickly together.

The high or main road exceeds in diameter the body of the mole, and is solid and well trodden, with smooth sides. Its depth varies, according to the quality of the soil, instinct directing the little excavator in his work. Ordinarily it is five or six inches below the surface, but when carried under a streamlet or pathway it is often a foot and a half beneath. It sometimes happens that the mole will drive two or more additional high-roads, which will not admit of two passing at the same time. One, therefore, must retreat. But when two moles thus come into collision they frequently attack each other, the weaker falling a victim in the combat. The alleys opening from the sides of the high-road are generally inclined downward with a gradual slope, and then at the termination of these the mole excavates branch alleys, upheaving mole hills as it works onward in pursuit of prey. This, however, is not invariably the case, but rather where prey is abundant in rich soils.

Where the soil is barren, the mole is constantly driving fresh alleys; these in winter are carried deep down to where the worms have pierced their way beyond the line to which the frost penetrates; for, be it observed, the mole does not hybernate, but is as active during winter as in spring or summer, though the results of his operations are less manifest. In soft, rich soils, where the worms are among the roots of the turf, the mole, as may be often noticed, drives very superficial runs in the pursuit of them; these runs are to be seen where a thin layer of richly manured soil overlays a stratum of gravel; in fact, the depth of these alleys is always determined by the quality of the soil and consequent situation of the worms. With respect to the nest of the female, it is generally constructed at a distance from the fortress, where, at some convenient part, three or four passages intersect each other; this point of convergence is enlarged and rendered commodious, and fitted to receive a bed made of dry herbage, fibrous roots, etc. The chamber is generally beneath a large hillock, but not always; and the surrounding soil is usually such as to afford abundant food to the female with little trouble on her part. The mole breeds in the spring, mostly in April, and brings forth four or five young at a birth. These are supposed to remain under the mother's care until about half grown, when they commence an independent existence.

COUNTS MILLION PEAS

JOHN D. WAINWRIGHT of Meddybemps, Me., recently started to count the peas in jars said to contain 1,000,000 of them. If there is exactly that number, Wainwright will have to eat them, but if that figure is one out of the way, Henry Parish must do so.

It started in an argument on Washington's birthday. Parish offered to bet $2.50 that he could count 1,000,000 peas in a month, and Wainwright took him up. After he had counted out 100,000 Wainwright suggested that they amend the wager to read that if the count was incorrect Parish would eat the peas, while Wainwright would do so if it was correct. Parish counted the first 100,000 over again and was filled with nervous dread when he found that he was three peas out of the way. He proceeded with the count with utmost care, and finally announced that it was finished.

Wainwright thoughtfully surveyed row on row of glass fruit jars filled with peas.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," he said finally. "I'll assume your count is correct and pay you $2.50 and we'll call it square."

"Not on your life," said Parish. "If we assume my count is correct, you'll not only pay me the $2.50, but you'll eat those peas, every one of them."

"But how am I to find out whether there are exactly 1,000,000 in those jars?" protested Wainwright.

"By counting them, of course," rejoined Parish shortly.

So Wainwright began his laborious task, which he expected to complete by May 1. We have heard nothing further as to who won out. If any of our readers want a hard task let them try counting a million.

The Black Bag

by

Edgar Daniel Kramer

"IT'S a pinch sure!" the Owl mumbled to himself as the shrill staccato of police whistles startled into his ears while he was holding a seance at The Union Trust.

The Owl had earned his sobriquet, for through the length and the breadth of the underworld he was dubbed a wise guy. His nocturnal proclivities had little or nothing to do with its acquisition, because in those circles it is a natural law that the dwellers there be up and doing while the rest of the world slumbers. When the shadows fall and the street lamps glimmer, the world beyond the pale shakes off its lethargy and rouses to the tasks it has in hand.

The Owl was a cold-chisel expert. He made his boasts that the safe wasn't put together that he couldn't open as easily as he winked his eye. None argued the point. His method was strictly his own, and, like any artist, he took a keen pride in his craftsmanship. There was a certain distinction about the jobs he pulled. There was no fuss, no noise, only the safe door swinging wide and the swag gone.

"That's the Owl!" the sleuths would exclaim as they went over a rifled safe. "That's the lad all over!"

But when it came to sending him over the route, that was a fish with another tail. In all his years as an expert cracksman he had laughed at the law. The "bulls" had never got the goods on him.

However, on this occasion, in spite of his startled surprise, the Owl seemed to sense intuitively that the game was up. He smothered his light quickly, gathered his tools and started to make his get-away as quietly as he had come. He heard voices and suddenly realized that his escape was cut off. He retreated softly. He could hear the police all around him. He waited as tense as a tautened fiddle-string. Heavy forms groped into the place of shadows. The police feared to risk a light. The Owl's gun spat viciously through the darkness. He heard a man groan and a soft thud as of a body falling. Men were now shouting around him, flames were darting like serpents' tongues through the shadows, bullets were spattering against the walls. Suddenly a burning iron seemed to tear through the flesh of the Owl's gun-arm. His fingers became paralyzed and his automatic clattered to the floor. Then the lights flared on. Blood was running along the cracksman's arm and dripping down over his fingers. Sprawled on his back, glassy-eyed, lay one of the bluecoats.

"Good-mornin', gang!" the Owl sneered.

But with blows and curses his captors put the bracelets on him and hustled him away.

While his arm was mending in the hospital he had abundant leisure to think matters over.

"Somebody tipped you guys off," he would say to his guard. "I've been double-crossed."

"Rot!" the guard would retort. "You tried to beat the game once too often, Owl. You can't win all the time, you know."

"Nothin' in that stuff," the Owl would whisper Rose out of the corner of his mouth. "That once-too-often stuff is all bunk! I can still put two an' two together an' add 'em straight."

The more he considered the affair the more certain he became that he had been betrayed.

"Th' bulls was too sure," he would mumble. "They wasn't doin' no guessin'. They was playin' a soft one. I was th' sucker. I wonder who played me low?"

Thus he would rack his brains. He had them, too, or why was he dubbed the Owl?

All through his trial he sat disconsolate, indifferent to what was going on around him. His plea of not guilty was merely a formality. As a member of the criminal world, and a killer besides, he knew what his end would be. He was wretched because his capture had placed a blot upon his record. This circumstance cut him to the quick, hurt his pride.

"Tough, Owl!" his cronies commiserated with him. "But we all get it sooner or later."

"Hell!" he would snort in derision. "Th' bulls wouldn't have nabbed me, but somebody put 'em wise. Don't tell me! There was a leak somewhere! I know!"

Shaking their heads, they would leave him.

"What's th' use of all this fuss?" he would ask his attorneys. "Why don't they take me out an' set me in th' easy-chair an' turn on th' juice? Why don't they? I'd like to get this mess over with."

"Justice demands that you be given a fair trial," he would be told.

"Justice? Huh!" the Owl would sneer. "How 'bout th' bird that got me here? How 'bout th' guy that piped off th' bulls? Justice? What's going to happen to him?"

As was a foregone conclusion, the Owl was convicted. Before the judge passed sentence he asked the prisoner if he had anything to say in his own behalf. The Owl slouched to his feet, his hands gripping the railing in front of him.

"Your Honor," he began huskily, "there ain't much I can say. Your duty is your duty, an' you're goin' to send me on th' long sleep. I ain't got nothin' to say agin that. But I want to say this: I didn't have no sportin' chance or I wouldn't be here. See? Somebody snitched. Somebody double-crossed me. That's what's got me riled!" His voice was vibrant with passion now. "An' hell ain't goin' to be too deep to keep me from squarin' things, so help me!"

Rose passed an hour with him every day that he waited in the death house. His suspicion became an obsession. She would shake her head and listen with a bored expression as he tramped his cell ever muttering under his breath.

"Honey," she would try to soothe him, "yu're workin' yourself up all for nothin'."

"Nothin'?" he would snarl. "Huh! Some dirty whelp squeals an' you call that nothin'!"

"I mean worryin' ain't goin' to help you now."

"You never can tell," he would growl, and sudden fear of him would creep into the woman's eyes.

With firm step the Owl walked down the long corridor to the death chamber. To Rose, who clung to his arm, the distance seemed endless. At the door they parted. She kissed him and clung to him sobbing. He bent over her and whispered to her. Then he pushed her away roughly and stepped across the threshold into the little room where eternity begins.

"Everything's just to th' merry-merry," the Owl grinned as they turned on the current.

When Rose returned to the room that she and the Owl had called home she dropped her hat and coat on a chair and threw herself on the bed with a sigh of relief. She lit a cigarette.

"I'm sure glad that's over," she sighed. "This actin' game ain't no pipe an' I ain't no Barrymore."

She settled back more comfortably and inhaled luxuriously. There came a soft knock upon the door.

"Come in," she yawned.

A man entered noiselessly and sat on the edge of the bed. He was heavy and slow of movement. His face was jowled, his eyes lit-

tle like a pig's, his mouth loose, his hair thinning.

"Kiss me, hon!" The woman lifted her face to his, and the man's eyes brightened as their mouths clung.

"He's gone?" he finally asked as he lit a cigarette.

"Yep, lieutenant," she simpered. "Th' Owl went out at six-forty-five."

"A bit too soon for the lieutenant stuff, girlie," he corrected, "but this job surely ought to land it for me. Chief's tickled with my work. Being a lieutenant of police isn't to be sneezed at, girlie."

"He was still talkin' about th' double-cross when they led him to th' chair," she chuckled. "He sure held tight to that one idea."

"He had a hunch. Th' Owl was great for hunches, you know."

"But he didn't get wise."

"Love is blind," he smiled oilily at her, "an' it's just as good for us he didn't know."

"You ain't sorry, are you, hon?"

"Sorry, kid? Why, I'd go through hell for you!"

"It was our only way out," she murmured. "He was crazy about me, an' he would have killed you."

"You're right, girlie."

"We just had to get rid of him!"

"That's all right, honey!" He took her in his arms. "He's gone now. We won't lose any sleep over him. We put it over on the wise guy. See?"

"I love you!" she breathed.

"Now we can be happy together."

"We won't have to be afraid any more."

"Th' whole scheme's worked out fine." He became enthusiastic. "We'll be married after a while. After this blows over a bit."

"You meanin' to throw me down?" she demanded with an ugly look in her eyes. "Any of that stuff from you and—blooey! You'll follow th' Owl so quick you won't know what's hit you. All I got to do is say th' word."

"This haul has helped me a lot, given me a big boost with the chief," he went on, as if she had not interrupted. "We've been after th' Owl for years, an' finally I got him with th' goods. That's some feather in my cap!"

"You mean I got him for you!" she sneered.

"Sure!" he agreed.

"I got th' poor fool's tongue waggin' with booze," she continued excitedly. "He began braggin' of his next job. I put you wise, because I love you better'n I ever loved him. All these weeks I've been a-huggin' an' a-kissin' him when I hated him worse'n poison."

"We'll go 'way on our weddin' trip," he coaxed. "How's that? I'll get a month's leave."

She kissed him lingeringly, then sat beside him on the edge of the bed.

"All th' time he was suspectin' some one." She cuddled close. "Never once did he think of us. Of course he didn't know about you, Mr. Plain-clothes Man. Then to-day he whispered that he had provided for me. We had provided for him all right. I almost laughed in th' poor bob's face."

"Now that he's gone," the man advised, "let's forget him."

"Th' sooner th' better!" she laughed. "As I left him he whispered that there's a little trap-door under th' table. He said there's something under it he's been savin' for me."

"He was always thinkin' of you, eh?"

"He sure was," she chuckled.

With nervous haste they pushed the table aside and rolled back the rug. Both of them were thinking of the Owl's many successful coups and already their eyes were gloating upon rifled treasure. The man now examined the floor carefully. Rose leaned over him.

"I see nothin' that looks like a trap-door," he grunted.

"It's here, all right," Rose insisted. "Th' Owl never lied. Maybe there's a secret spring."

Together they began feeling over the boards, applying pressure to each of them in turn. Suddenly a portion of the floor was seen to move, then to lift slowly so as to reveal a small cavity. Unable to restrain herself longer, Rose reached in and carefully lifted out a heavy black leather bag. The man groped about in the hole, but found nothing else.

While Rose stood, flushed with anticipation, holding the bag, he closed the trap, which caught with a metallic click, spread out the rug, and put the table in its accustomed place. Rose set the bag on the able. They stood facing each other, the bag between them. Rose

swung around to the door with a jerk and a startled expression.

"What's th' matter?" her companion asked.

"Did you hear anything?" Rose gasped.

"Not a thing!"

"I thought I heard th' Owl!" she breathed. "I'd a swore it was him comin' down th' hall."

"Th' Owl's dead!" the man snapped. "Don't be a fool!"

"Th' Owl's dead!" she echoed with forced gaiety. "An' when a thing's dead it's dead!"

But there was a note of uncertainty in her voice and her face was unusually pale as her eyes came back to rest on the black bag.

"What's in it?" she spoke wonderingly.

"Open it an' see," he advised.

They leaned over the bag together. She pressed the catch. It clicked with a strange hiss like the crackling of a match. For a moment their eyes lifted and they stared at each other, their faces tortured with hideous, haunting doubt. There came a flash of blinding flame, and the room shook and crumbled with a terrific explosion that left Rose and her lover broken, lifeless things in the midst of the smoke and dust and falling debris.

Of a truth, the Owl was wise!

Send us a one-cent stamp to cover postage, and we will mail you a copy of "Moving Picture Stories."

FIND INDIANS' BURIAL CHAMBER

TWO burial chambers are the most interesting of numerous recent discoveries in the Aztec ruin—an enormous prehistoric Pueblo community dwelling near Aztec, N. M., which is being explored by the American Museum of Natural History. In his latest letter to the museum Earl H. Morris, who is in charge of the excavating, writes:

"Beneath the debris adjacent to the famous Painted Room, opened in 1920, there has been found a second chamber, perfectly preserved in every detail. The pine and cedar beams in the smoke-browned ceiling are as sound as when the trees were felled, and on the wall-stones the marks of the quartzite pebbles with which they were faced are as bright and fresh as if the artisan who shaped the blocks, though dead these thousand years, had but yesterday gathered up his primitive tools and stepped out of the finished chamber.

"This room was the tomb of a warrior who lay in solitary state against one wall immediately back of the recessed altar in the Painted Room. The body was that of a veritable giant over 6 feet and 1 inch in height, who thus towered head and shoulders above the average men of his tribe. Death came to the stalwart defender of the village when he was in the prime of life and in the height of his glory, as well, if one may infer the esteem in which he was held by the excellence of his tomb and the number of his burial accompaniments. The mighty frame had been wrapped in a mantle of feather cloth and enshrouded with a mat of woven rush stems. Back of the body there were four magnificent pottery bowls, a cup and a basket. Upon the skull rested a large spherical vase with a neatly fitting cover, both of them exquisitely wrought and ornamented. Within easy grasp of the right hand were the wooden handles of two stone battle axes, and by them a hafted knife of quartzite, as well as chips of flint and prongs of antler, the latter materials and implements for arrow making. A circular shield, 3 feet in diameter, unlike anything previously found in Pueblo ruins, covered the warrior from thighs to temples. It is an example of coiled basketry technique, but unusually thick and strong. The outer surface had been coated with gum and thickly spangled with flakes of mica. When held in the sunlight, due to the numberless reflecting surfaces, the great disk would have shone with dazzling brilliance, perhaps sufficiently intense to have confused the vision of the archer who sought to drive his arrow through the shield to the living flesh behind it.

"A fallen chamber not far distant from the warrior's tomb contained thirteen skeletons. These bodies had been laid away at different times and covered with ashes and sweepings from the floors of the village."

The Revolver

By EDWIN BAIRD

CHAPTER ONE

THE SPY

THE library of Judge Rufus Blackburn could scarcely be termed a romantic spot, but to Douglas Quinn, ex-service man, the soul of romance dwelt here, for it was in this solemn place, lined with grave volumes in sheepskin, that he proposed marriage to the judge's niece, Marjorie Blackburn, and was accepted.

She had never seemed more lovely than on that wintry afternoon. The westering sun slanted its rays through the window and shed a golden splendor upon the musty antiques and shelves of books. But the radiant girl in Quinn's arm glorified the drab old room in a far more potent way.

"And you'll always love me?" she asked, her face uplifted, her eyes gazing into his.

His answer, though mute, was eloquent. He drew her closer and kissed her upturned lips.

"No matter what happens?" she went on, a new note of earnestness in her voice.

"Of course I will, sweetheart—always and forever and ever! What *could* happen," he asked, smiling fondly upon her, "that would even make you think I might not always love you?"

She lowered her eyes and stared absently at the old-fashioned rug.

"I was thinking," she began slowly, avoiding his eyes, "of—Uncle Rufus."

Young Quinn's expression changed. His ardent emotion suffered a chill. He knew too well that Judge Blackburn disapproved of him as a prospective nephew-in-law. He knew also—and this hurt him most—that the judge did approve of Henry McKinlock, a promising young attorney. Quinn, however, revealed no trace of his unhappy thoughts when he said with a reassuring smile:

"But why let that trouble you? I know, of course, that your uncle doesn't like me, but you are of legal age, and you can marry whom you choose."

"And I choose to marry you," she murmured, nestling close to him.

"Then there's nothing to worry about," he said contentedly.

"No. Only—I was thinking. Suppose Uncle Rufus *should* do something—something particularly disagreeable — perhaps you might——"

"Never!" he stoutly declared as she paused. "Nothing that he, or anybody else, might do would lessen my love for you in the slightest."

"I'm afraid," she said, as if thinking aloud, "Uncle Rufus will be so furious when he hears of our engagement."

"Of course he will!" Quinn readily agreed. "I expect that, and I'm prepared for his fury. But just why does he dislike me, anyway, I wonder?"

"I think it's because you chose a newspaper career, after coming back from France, instead of entering the legal profession. He doesn't like newspaper men."

"And he does like lawyers, apparently, for McKinlock is a lawyer."

"My uncle," mused Marjorie, "is a hard man."

Young Quinn required no reminder of this. The room in which they sat reflected the personality of Judge Blackburn, stern, austere, hard. And Quinn surmised that Marjorie's life here had not always been happy. Orphaned at a tender age, left penniless in the world, she had found refuge in the home of her father's brother, a widower, upon whom she had since been wholly dependent.

Thinking of this, young Quinn was swept

by a longing to protect her, to work for her, to devote his life to making her happy. He again put his arms around her, but now suddenly she withdrew from his embrace, with a warning glance at the window behind him.

He looked over his shoulder toward the window and beheld a trampish man atop a stepladder outside, a dripping sponge in his hand, peering at them through the glass. Seeing he was discovered, the man promptly resumed his task of washing the window. Undersized, shriveled, clad in grimy rags, and wearing a ragged beard and tattered hat, he presented no pleasing appearance. As he slid the sponge over the glass Quinn noticed that the first two fingers of the man's right hand were missing.

"A tough-looking bum," he commented to Marjorie. "How long do you suppose he's been watching us?"

"Heaven knows!" she laughed. "I never suspected he was there until I saw him spying at us through the window. He's probably an odd-jobs man hired by the housekeeper."

The topic being of interest to neither, the trampish man was quickly forgotten by both. Matters infinitely more important claimed their thoughts. For upward of an hour they sat in the grim old library discussing their future; and so happily engrossed were they they also forgot Judge Blackburn.

But when young Quinn took his departure he was reminded of the judge, and not pleasantly, either. Descending the front steps, he passed Henry McKinlock ascending. The two men nodded coldly.

Next morning a servant from Judge Blackburn's home apeared at Quinn's boarding-house with a note from Marjorie. It was written on heavy, pale-blue notepaper and read as follows:

"DEAREST: Since you were here yesterday I've been thinking over what I said to you, and I'm a little afraid that what I said or implied about Uncle Rufus may have troubled you unnecessarily. I suppose I was overwrought at the time or I wouldn't have talked that way. At any rate, there is nothing to worry about. It's just as you said: Uncle Rufus can never do anything that will harm us or lessen our love for each other. Please come over tonight and talk everything over with him. I shall do my best to have him in good humor."

Quinn read the note through twice, then lifted the thick blue paper to his nostrils. It was delicately scented with violets.

Then, putting the note in an inner pocket, he buttoned his overcoat and blithely proceeded to the local room of *The Morning Star*, where he was employed as a reporter at $45 a week. His heart was gay, singing with joy and the zest of life.

His delight increased when his city editor obligingly consented to release him from duty at seven o'clock that evening, and it fairly overflowed as he walked to Judge Blackburn's home.

When he faced Marjorie, however, his happiness suffered a setback. It was clear that something disagreeable had happened.

"I'm afraid," she said, forcing a smile to her lips, "that I chose an unfavorable hour when I said eight o'clock. I'm so sorry; I tried to get you on the phone, but you'd left your office; I wanted to tell you——"

"What is it, Marjorie? What has happened?"

"It's Uncle Rufus. He brought Henry McKinlock home for dinner. They're upstairs now in uncle's study. Uncle Rufus is in a terrible rage about something or other. I'm not sure what it is, but I never saw him so upset——"

"Well, that certainly spoils our plans. But let's not fret about it. I believe I can have an enjoyable visit here, even if I don't see Uncle Rufus."

Marjorie failed to share his merriment. There was a distinct note of anxiety in her voice when she asked hesitatingly:

"Do you really think you ought to stay, Douglas?"

"Sure! Why not? I can't afford to waste a perfectly good evening. Besides, I'd a million times rather talk with you than with Uncle Rufus."

"Yes; I know. But——" She left the sentence unfinished and glanced toward the upper floor. She seemed to be listening with dread for sounds from the study.

"I saw McKinlock yesterday," Quinn went on, trying to speak in a care-free manner.

"Met him outside as I was leaving. He wasn't by any chance calling on you?"

"Yes, Douglas; he was. You hadn't been gone a minute before he came in. He—— I'm not sure that I ought to tell you——"

"Please do!"

"Well, h-he—he asked me to marry him!"

"Oh!" said Quinn. "What else?"

"Nothing else except—I can't bear the sight of him. I loathe him. I always have. I don't know why. I can't understand why Uncle Rufus has always been so fond of him, and now—what makes it stranger still——"

She broke off suddenly and seized his arm with an excited whisper: "Sh-h! Here he comes now!"

Quinn, listening, heard voices upstairs—McKinlock's and her uncle's—raised in anger. Both apparently were talking at once, and Quinn could make nothing of what they said, except that each spoke angrily. Then he heard footfalls rapidly descending. In another moment McKinlock flashed into view on the front stairway and rushed from the house into the night without speaking to them; without even noticing their presence.

As the heavy front door banged behind him Quinn stood up and smiled down at Marjorie, almost submerged in a deep armchair before a log fire in the grate.

"Now for the judge!" he said.

She glanced up, a little startled, it seemed. Her thoughts evidently had been far away, and the sound of his voice awoke her from an unhappy reverie.

"I—Douglas, I almost hate to have you see him to-night. He's in such an ugly temper, and I'm afraid——"

"*I'm* not, though. And I'll beard him in his den and come forth victorious." And, leaning over the leather back of her chair, he kissed her reassuringly and turned and hastened upstairs.

CHAPTER TWO

WARNING!

JUDGE BLACKBURN'S study was on the third floor—a large front room, with three windows facing the street. Two of these windows opened upon a small veranda that was seldom if ever used.

The judge, a tall, powerfully built man of advanced age, was seated at a huge mahogany desk, his back to the door, when Quinn appeared on the threshold. He looked up inquiringly over his shoulder; and then, recognizing Quinn, his protruding gray eyebrows drew together in a scowl.

"I've nothing for *The Star* to-night," he said, and turned back to his desk.

Unbidden, young Quinn entered the room, smiling easily.

"I don't want anything for *The Star* to-night, judge. I want something for myself."

Judge Blackburn, without looking around, asked coldly:

"And what do you want—for yourself?"

"I want your niece," said Quinn, coming straight to the point. "I want to marry Marjorie."

The judge swung around in his swivel chair and eyed the young man in a strange way. His rugged countenance, his iron-gray hair, his entire being, in fact, seemed to reflect a hard animosity; and his voice, always severe, was unusually caustic when he said:

"And you expect my consent to such a marriage?"

"I had hoped—both of us had—that you might——"

"That's too bad," the judge interrupted. "The thing is absurd—utterly impossible."

"Marjorie doesn't think so. Nor I, either."

"How would you support her? Have you thought of that?"

"Often," said Quinn. "I'm getting forty-five dollars a week, and——"

"That wouldn't pay her dressmaker's bills."

"Lots of married people live on less. Besides, I'm due for a raise pretty soon. And I'm fitting myself for the city editor's job, which pays five thousand a year. Marjorie and I could get along well enough."

Judge Blackburn, leaning back in his wide swivel chair, lowered his massive head and regarded Quinn from beneath his shaggy eyebrows. His gaze was peculiarly disconcerting.

"I think I see what you mean," he said, and the measured words cut like steel. "You mean you could get along if I helped you. Well, you're headed straight for disappointment.

Marjorie, as you know, has nothing of her own, and should she be so unwise as to marry you she will get nothing from me—*not one cent!*"

Quinn felt his face flush hotly. For the first time since entering the study angry resentment flared within him.

"If you do that, Judge Blackburn," he said, trying hard to speak calmly, "you will remove the only obstacle that now stands between Marjorie and me. Marjorie's wealth, or her prospect of inheriting wealth from you, has been the one thing that has often restrained me from asking her to share my life."

"Naturally," remarked the judge ironically, "you haven't considered *her*. You haven't reflected what it will mean to her to give up a fortune for the sake of marrying you. You have thought only of yourself. Isn't that so?"

He permitted the young man no chance to reply, but continued with sardonic humor:

"This fortune may come to her—that is, if she's sensible enough *not to marry you*—somewhat sooner than she probably expects." He took from his desk a sheet of pale-blue notepaper and held it in his fingers as he continued: "You know, of course, as every newspaper man in this city knows, that I receive many anonymous letters threatening my life. Almost every federal judge does. But I seem to be especially marked for them since I sentenced that crowd of I. W. W. to the federal penitentiary in Leavenworth.

"This is the latest one. It came this afternoon, and its author declares I shall die before twelve o'clock to-night." He glanced at his watch. "It's now fifteen minutes past nine. I haven't much longer to live, have I?" He chuckled grimly and handed the anonymous note to Quinn.

With horrified fascination Quinn had been staring at the small bit of blue paper, scarcely able to believe his eyes; and now, as his fingers closed upon it, as he identified the violet odor which clung to it, he underwent a violent shock. His host had not asked him to sit down, so he had remained standing throughout his call; but now, uninvited, he sank into the nearest chair, the paper trembling in his nervous fingers, his thoughts awhirl.

The crude lettering, printed with a lead-pencil, became only a blur before his eyes. In his chaotic brain a flaming thought stood out in clear-cut relief:

Marjorie had written this!

Quinn returned the note to Judge Blackburn. He murmured something indistinctly—he scarcely knew what—while struggling to regain his lost composure.

At this moment a servant (a new arrival in the Blackburn household named Zuttermeister) came to the door and announced:

"Mr. McKinlock is calling, sir."

Judge Blackburn looked surprised.

"McKinlock?" he echoed, puzzled. "Are you sure it is he?"

"Yes, sir; the same gentleman who called before, sir."

"Very well. Ask him to come up."

The servant departed, and Quinn rose. Judge Blackburn stopped him as he moved toward the door, and his utterance, unlike his prior speech, was almost kindly:

"Think over what I've said, my boy, and I believe you will agree with me. If you care for Marjorie's future happiness—and I hope you do—you will give her up. Good-night."

Scarcely hearing what the judge said, scarcely caring to hear, Quinn left the room and started downstairs, his thoughts still swirling around a baffling enigma:

Had Marjorie threatened her uncle's life?

He passed McKinlock on the stairs and spoke to him absently. So preoccupied were his thoughts that the peculiarity of McKinlock's returning passed unnoticed.

When Quinn reached the second-floor landing he saw Marjorie in the doorway of her sitting-room.

"Well?" she asked eagerly as he came toward her. "What did he say?"

Holding her hands in his, gazing into her starry eyes, young Quinn experienced great difficulty in bringing himself to say:

"I'm afraid, Marjorie, we'll have to break our engagement. I can't marry you."

He felt her hands tighten convulsively on his. The radiance died from her face.

"Douglas! You surely don't mean—— What *did* uncle say to you?" she demanded.

"He said—— Well, he said enough to convince me we mustn't marry."

"What did he say?" she insisted, her eyes never leaving his face.

"He said he would disinherit you."

A disquieting change came over her.

"Oh! Now—I begin—to see—what you mean," she said slowly in a dispirited voice, and quietly withdrew her hands. "Oh, Douglas! I never supposed—I never *dreamed*—you could think of *that!* You told me you loved me, and I—believed you." She turned swiftly and entered her room.

After a momentary hesitation he followed her, tormented by the sickening realization that to her he was only a sordid fortune-hunter. Then, all at once, this feeling was supplanted by another, more distressing, emotion. His troubled gaze, glancing about the pretty room, had encountered a dainty little desk in a corner, and now his eyes became riveted there. On the desk was a small pearl-handled revolver. Like a thing of evil, it lay on the blotting-pad beneath the green-shaded desk-lamp; and it brought back, in an overwhelming flood, his harrowing thoughts of her.

She stood at a window, her shoulders drooping, staring listlessly into the winter's night. Presently, without turning, she said in a dull, lifeless tone: "There is nothing more to be said except good-by."

"Marjorie——" he began passionately, and took a step toward her. But the expression on her face stopped him.

After a pause he murmured "Good-night," and turned and left the house.

Like a man dazed, he started down the quiet avenue toward the next corner, where he intended to catch a street car.

Before he had taken a hundred steps, however, he heard two revolver shots ring out sharply on the cold night air, and he stopped short in his tracks, electrified, his senses suddenly tense and alert.

A moment later he was running back in the direction of the Blackburn home. As he ran he glanced quickly at the third-floor front windows.

A light still shone in Judge Blackburn's study, and one of the windows, he noticed, was open upon the small veranda. An instant later he saw a dark form, presumably that of a man, climb up over the cornice of the roof, above the balcony, and disappear.

Ringing the doorbell and pounding on the plate-glass panel, Quinn heard, somewhere inside, a girl's piercing scream. Then all was still, except for his tumultuous noise at the door.

After what seemed an interminable length of time the door was opened by a frightened maid-servant, whose face was as white as her linen collar. Speechless with fear, she pointed tremblingly toward the study, and he bounded up the stairs.

The study door stood open. Marjorie lay, face down, across the threshold. And her uncle sat in his swivel chair, his massive head bowed, his waistcoat stained with blood.

Quinn lifted the unconscious girl and carried her into an adjacent bedroom, telling the maid, who had followed him, to call a doctor. Then he quickly returned to the study to see what could be done.

Judge Blackburn was dead—clearly murdered.

And on the floor, beside his body, lay *Marjorie's pearl-handled revolver!*

CHAPTER THREE

ZUTTERMEISTER

A HASTY examination disclosed the fact that Judge Blackburn had been shot twice through the heart. That it was Marjorie's weapon which had inflicted the fatal wounds seemed clear when Quinn found two of its chambers empty.

Resolved to protect her at any cost, he quickly slipped the revolver into his overcoat pocket and, working swiftly, searched the dead man's desk until he found the sheet of blue notepaper containing the threat of death. This he also pocketed. Thus, possessing the only evidence against the girl he loved, he experienced relief, but not for long.

A sudden noise behind caused him to whirl around, and he beheld in the doorway the new servant, Zuttermeister, watching him in a peculiarly offensive way. Undoubtedly this man had seen every move that Quinn had made.

"Did Mr. McKinlock go out?" Quinn demanded.

"I don't know," said the servant, looking

pointedly at the overcoat pocket wherein Quinn had concealed the small revolver.

"You didn't see him leave?"

"No."

Quinn was thinking rapidly. If McKinlock hadn't left the house, then it must have been he whom Quinn had seen climbing upon the roof from the balcony.

"Is there a fire-escape on this house?" he asked.

"No."

"Good! Then he's probably still on the roof."

At this juncture the housekeeper, a stout, elderly woman, came puffing up the stairs, breathing heavily, and to her Quinn said:

"Attend to Miss Blackburn. She's in the next room, unconscious. Keep her quiet till the doctor arrives." And to Zuttermeister: "Call the police at once. Watch the house carefully and see that nobody leaves. Have the other servants search every room and closet for the criminal. Look sharp!"

Quinn hurried to the open window and stepped out upon the balcony. Gripping the cornice above in both hands, he drew himself up to the roof.

Then, creeping on all fours along the slippery surface of the flat roof, he came to an opening large enough to admit a man's body. Carefully inspecting all sides of the roof, he assured himself that no person could drop therefrom and live to tell of it.

Assuming, then, the fugitive had disappeared through the trap-door, Quinn promptly did likewise, and found himself in an attic which extended the full length of the house. Groping through the inky darkness, striking matches as he went, he at last discovered an electric switch and flooded the place with light.

The attic was an admirable hiding-place, but a thorough search proved that nobody was hiding there.

Puzzled and chagrined Quinn descended to the third floor and searched two rear rooms without success. Attracted by the sound of voices, he started toward the front of the house.

In the study he found two policemen and a plain-clothes detective, whom he knew by name, vainly endeavoring to get a connected story from the servants, all of them much excited except Zuttermeister, who stood a little apart from the others, saying nothing, but paying close heed to all that was said.

Quinn asked him if the house had been searched as he directed, and the man answered shortly:

"I searched it myself and found nothing."

Quinn eyed him narrowly. He didn't like the man's looks nor his way of speaking, and yet he dared not reveal this, because, remembering the revolver, he knew he was in Zuttermeister's power. He turned to the housekeeper:

"How is Miss Blackburn?"

"The doctor is with her now, Mr. Quinn, and she's resting quietly, I think. She was terribly upset."

The detective, a thick-set, florid man named Sullivan, greeted Quinn from a corner of his mouth:

"How'd *you* get here so soon? Somebody tip you off? Well, you sure got a dandy beat for *The Star*. I'll say that for you."

But the thought of giving this "story" to his paper was repugnant to Quinn. At the risk of losing his job on *The Star*, he decided not to notify his office. He decided to let the news seep out through the usual channels.

The quick turn of events in the next few minutes, however, recommended a revision of this plan.

Sullivan glanced sharply at Zuttermeister, then left the study and sauntered casually down the hall, motioning quietly to Quinn to follow.

"Looks like an inside job, Quinn," he said, when they reached the rear end of the hall.

"It *is* an inside job, Sullivan, and I'll tell you why." Quinn then related all that had happened in the Blackburn household since eight o'clock that evening, pointedly avoiding Marjorie's name or anything concerned with her. Forgetful in his sharp anxiety that he alone possessed any evidence against her, he was earnestly striving to deflect suspicion from the girl he loved.

"Then you think I'd better pinch McKinlock?" Sullivan asked. "Henry McKinlock is a pretty big man in this town, Quinn."

"Henry McKinlock," repeated Quinn, "was the last person seen with Judge Blackburn. He was in the judge's study at about twenty minutes past nine to-night. Fifteen minutes later

the judge was killed. I was back in the study five minutes after that. McKinlock had disappeared."

"That long-faced guy," said Sullivan, jerking a blunt thumb toward Zuttermeister, "looks phony to me. What *d'you* think?"

"He's the one who announced McKinlock's return to the judge, and later he told me he'd searched the house as I directed, but I doubt that he did it."

"Well, we'll see about that." The detective strode back to Zuftermeister and dropped his heavy hand on the servant's shoulder.

"Come along with me," he said, "to the station."

Zuttermeister regarded him coldly. "For what reason?"

"Don't ask foolish questions."

"If you think I know who committed this crime," and Zuttermeister spoke with studied insolence, "you're badly mistaken. If you really want a clue to the murder; if you want to *find the weapon that killed Judge Blackburn,* look in the right-hand pocket of that man's overcoat." And he leveled a lean forefinger at Quinn.

"How about it, Quinn?" the detective asked doubtfully. "Is he stalling or telling the truth?"

Without a word, Quinn took the pearl-handled revolver from his pocket and gave it to Sullivan, who promptly examined it and noted the two empty chambers.

"Well? Anything else?"

"Yes," said Zuttermeister, as Quinn remained silent. "Look in his inside coat pocket and you will find a sheet of blue notepaper which he took from Judge Blackburn's desk after the judge was murdered."

Quinn silently handed over the anonymous note penciled on Marjorie's stationery. The detective read it through with evident satisfaction, then carefully enclosed it in his police-book.

"Who does this stuff belong to, Quinn?"

The harassed young man, in a last desperate effort to shield the girl he loved, stoutly declared he did not know.

"Then what'd you take it for?" demanded Sullivan.

"Because I wanted a scoop, of course. I knew if you fellows got hold of it first you'd give it to *all* the papers, and I wanted something exclusive for *The Star.*"

At this point Zuttermeister spoke again:

"Both the note and the revolver," he said, pronouncing his words very distinctly, "belong to Miss Marjorie Blackburn. Mr. Quinn, I think, will agree with me that this is true."

Sullivan turned upon the servant with a sharp interrogation:

"How do *you* happen to know so much about this? Who are you shielding, anyway?"

"I am shielding nobody. I am merely trying to help you catch the person who killed my employer. Of course, if you don't want my aid——"

"Forget it! How d'you happen to know about this gun and the note?"

"I know that the revolver belongs to Miss Blackburn, because I saw it in her sitting-room to-day. I know that the writing-paper is hers because I carried a message for her this morning written on the same kind of stationery."

"You say you carried a message for her? Who'd you carry it to?"

"To Mr. Quinn," said Zuttermeister.

CHAPTER FOUR

QUINN IS ARRESTED

"QUINN, is this man tellin' the truth?" The detective looked curiously at the silent young man.

Quinn, sick at heart, nodded miserably, his eyes on the floor.

"Then you took the gun and the note to protect the girl. Is that right?"

Again Quinn nodded, not looking up.

Sullivan gave a low whistle of amazement. "Well, I'm damned! This sure puts a new face on matters! I'll have to take the three of you——"

"*No!*" The word burst from Quinn's lips. "Not Miss Blackburn! It would kill her, Sullivan! The shock—the disgrace——"

"Sorry, Quinn. I'll have to take her."

"Listen to me, Sullivan. I gave you a pretty good clue to-night. I can give you others. If you find the man who did this thing—and

it was a man, remember—it'll mean promotion for you. Besides, the girl won't run away. She can't! She's in that room there now, half dead from grief and terror. The doctor's with her. She couldn't run away if she wanted to. If you think there's the least uncertainly about it, detail Flynn and Kelly to watch her."

"I might do that," Sullivan conceded. "Meanwhile you and our long-faced friend here are going along with me to the station."

"But what about Henry McKinlock?"

"He's goin', too, just as soon as I get my hands on 'im!"

Marjorie was the first witness called when the coroner held his inquest in the Blackburn library on the following morning. Her face pale, her downcast eyes underlined with purple shadows, denoting a sleepless night, she answered the coroner's questions in a voice so low that she could not be heard across the room.

"Tell us," he said, "everything you know concerning your uncle's death."

"I was in my room," she replied, "preparing for bed, when I heard two revolver shots. I was, of course, terribly frightened. I couldn't tell at first which room in the house they came from, because they made a sort of muffled sound, and then I remembered something, and I dashed upstairs to Uncle Rufus's study——"

"One moment, please," interrupted the coroner. "What was it you remembered that caused you to think of your uncle?"

"I remembered that he had recently received several anonymous letters threatening his life."

"Did he show you these letters?"

"No; but he told me about them. I believe they came from the friends of some men whom he had sentenced to the penitentiary. He didn't take them seriously. In fact——"

"I see. Tell us what you found, please, when you entered the study."

The girl's fingers twisted together in excessive nervousness. She lifted her eyes momentarily, glanced appealingly at the faces around her, and lowered them again.

"I—it is very difficult to tell you about it. It was so—so horrifying! I saw uncle sitting at his desk. I called his name. He didn't answer. And then I saw—he was—*dead!*" The last word was uttered in a whisper.

"What did you do then?" asked the coroner.

"I screamed as loudly as I could. After that I suppose I must have fainted. I knew nothing more till I woke up in bed."

"To the best of your knowledge, who was the last person with your uncle before his death?"

"I think it was Henry McKinlock."

"Do you know whether or not your uncle and Mr. McKinlock quarreled last night?"

"He called on Rufus twice last night. The first time I heard them talking angrily. I didn't hear them the second time."

"You saw him go to the study the second time?"

"Yes."

"Did you see or hear him leave?"

"No."

"Who else visited your uncle last night?"

For the better part of a minute she was silent. Finally, without looking up, she murmured:

"Dug—Douglas Quinn."

"Did *he* quarrel with your uncle?"

"I—don't think—— No; I'm sure he didn't!"

"Was there any reason, so far as you know, why they *might* have quarreled?"

"N-no. No reason, I'm sure."

"When did Mr. Quinn leave your uncle?"

"He left just as Mr. McKinlock arrived—the second time."

"Do you know whether or not he came back?"

"I'm sure he didn't. At least, not until—afterward."

"Do you know the object of Mr. Quinn's visit to your uncle's house last night?"

"He—came to see me."

"Do you know why he went upstairs to speak to your uncle?"

"I—I think he wanted to speak to uncle—about me."

There was an audible stir in the room. The examination was taking an unexpected turn.

"Miss Blackburn," asked the coroner, "are you engaged to be married to Mr. Quinn?"

Her fingers trembled piteously. Her hands were clasping and unclasping in her lap. Quinn, waiting in breathless suspense for her

answer, knowing how much depended on it, at last heard her say in a forced whisper:

"No."

CHAPTER FIVE

TORTURE

THE tension in the room relaxed somewhat, but only temporarily. The subsequent questioning speedily restored it.

"Miss Blackburn, have you had any differences of opinion lately with your uncle?"

"No. That is, none to speak of. None that was serious."

"Prior to his death last night had you any feeling of enmity against him?"

"Certainly not!" she declared, and Quinn saw a warm flush spread slowly over her pale cheeks.

The coroner opened a small black valise on the floor beside his chair and took out the pearl-handled revolver.

"Is this your property, Miss Blackburn?"

She lifted her gaze and beheld the revolver, and then suddenly, with an inarticulate cry, she sat bolt upright in her chair, staring at the weapon in speechless amazement, her blue eyes wide with a nameless horror. The sudden hush in the room was ended by the coroner repeating his question.

"Yes," she whispered huskily, her hands gripping the arms of her chair. "I—yes; it belongs to me."

"Are you aware, Miss Blackburn, that this revolver, which you say is yours, is the revolver that killed your uncle?"

Marjorie opened her mouth as if to speak, then shook her head negatively and remained silent.

"It was found," continued the coroner, "beside your uncle's dead body a few minutes after he was killed. Two of the chambers were empty. The two bullets that killed him were removed by me from his body. They correspond with the remaining four in this revolver of yours, being of the same mold and caliber. How do you account for that, Miss Blackburn?"

"I—I c-can't——" she began falteringly, then stopped, unable to continue.

The coroner removed the sheet of blue notepaper from his satchel.

"Is this your property, Miss Blackburn?"

"I—it looks like a sheet of my stationery." She spoke with palpable fear, clearly dreading what was to follow.

"I'll ask you now," said the coroner, handing her the sheet of paper, "if you wrote the message contained on that sheet of stationery."

She read the crudely constructed words, and when she handed back the note her face was the color of chalk.

"No!" she gasped weakly. "I never saw it before."

"Do you know who wrote it? Or who might have written it?"

"I can't imagine! It's too horrible! I can't understand——" She stopped suddenly and asked: "Was that note found in uncle's study?"

"Yes; in his desk."

"Who found it?"

The coroner hesitated, carefully considering his answer.

"Both the note and the revolver," he said at last, "were found by Mr. Quinn."

For the first time she looked at Quinn, and the despairing reproach in her eyes seared him to the soul. He realized, in a flash of agony, the thought that was harrowing her mind.

And there was nothing he could do; nothing he could say!

Suddenly he uttered a sharp exclamation and sprang forward. Marjorie had fallen in a faint.

Marjorie was taken to her room, where a physician attended her.

Meanwhile Henry McKinlock was examined and testified substantially as follows:

"I had dinner last evening with Judge Blackburn, and afterward we went to his study, where we sat talking for perhaps an hour. In the course of our conversation we disagreed on a certain matter, and I'm afraid that each of us became more heated than was necessary. In any event we parted in anger. I returned a little later and apologized for my display of temper. After that I went home. I knew nothing of his death until a detective came to

my house about ten o'clock last night and placed me under arrest."

"You say you had a disagreement with Judge Blackburn," the coroner remarked. "Will you tell us, please, what you disagreed about?"

"It was really nothing of moment," said the lawyer in his calm, precise way. "It was, in fact, a quite trivial matter, and my only reason for mentioning it is to explain why I returned to Judge Blackburn's study."

"How long did you remain with him the second time?"

"Only a few moments. I went away again just as soon as I had offered a brief apology."

"Did you see any person as you went out?"

"Yes; I saw Miss Blackburn and Mr. Quinn."

"Did either of them see you?"

"I think not. Both had their backs toward me."

"You didn't speak to them or otherwise draw their attention?"

"No; I merely glanced into the room as I passed and walked on."

"Did you notice anything there—or anywhere else before leaving the house—that might arouse suspicion?"

"Yes. On the desk in Miss Blackburn's sitting-room I saw a pearl-handled revolver."

"Is this the revelver you saw?" The coroner gave him the fatal weapon.

"It appears to be the same one."

"While you were there last night did Judge Blackburn say anything in your presence that might indicate he was expecting, or dreading, sudden death?"

"He showed me an anonymous letter threatening his life."

"Is this the anonymous letter he showed you?" asked the coroner, handing him the sheet of notepaper.

McKinlock read the message carefully, examined the paper on both sides and then returned it.

"Yes; that's the one."

At this juncture Quinn scribbled something on the back of an envelope, and, unnoticed, slipped it to a fellow reporter, who, after reading it, quietly laid it on the table before the coroner.

The coroner's eye observed Quinn's note as he was asking a question of no great importance. He asked two or three more, likewise unimportant, and then unexpectedly he said:

"Mr. Kinlock, have you ever proposed marriage to Miss Marjorie Blackburn?"

The pointblank interrogation had a startling effect upon the attorney. His cool self-assurance, which had characterized him thus far, vanished instantly. Panic seized him.

"W-why," he stammered, his face reddening, "why, since you ask me, yes. But I quite fail to see how your question has any relation——"

"When did you propose marriage to her?"

"I think, if I remember correctly, it was day before yesterday. But what bearing has this——"

The coroner again cut him short:

"What answer did she give you?"

"Why, my dear man," sputtered the lawyer, beside himself with angry confusion, "you surely don't expect me——"

"Answer the question, please."

"And if I don't?"

"You refuse to answer it?"

"I do—emphatically!"

"Very well." The coroner turned to his assistant. "Recall Miss Blackburn to the witness chair."

CHAPTER SIX

"I KILLED JUDGE BLACKBURN!"

MARJORIE'S physician sent word that she was unable to leave her room at the moment, and the servant, Zuttermeister, was questioned instead.

"Did you see Mr. Henry McKinlock go to Judge Blackburn's study last night at a little past nine o'clock?" the coroner asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Did you see him depart?"

"No, sir."

"Tell us all you know concerning the death of Judge Blackburn."

"I opened the door for Mr. McKinlock when he called here the second time last evening, and I announced his arrival to my employer. I then came downstairs and told Mr. McKin-

lock the judge would see him. After that I went outdoors——"

"One moment. Why did you go outdoors?"

"I often stroll outside of an evening," Zuttermeister said calmly, "just to get a breath of fresh air before turning in for the night."

"While you were outdoors last night," pursued the coroner, "did you speak to anybody?"

"Yes, sir. I generally walk back to the garage for a good-night chat with the chauffeur, Frederick Hicks, and I was with him last night when I heard the two revolver shots. I rushed back to the house and ran upstairs to the judge's study. I found Mr. Quinn there. Judge Blackburn was dead."

"What was Mr. Quinn doing?"

"He was standing near the desk, and I saw him put the revolver—the same one that you have exhibited here, sir—in his overcoat pocket. He then searched the judge's desk until he found the sheet of blue notepaper, which he also pocketed."

"Was Mr. Quinn in Judge Blackburn's study when you announced the arrival of Mr. McKinlock?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you overhear anything they said to each other?"

"I overheard enough to warrant the belief that they were not on friendly terms. I gathered that they had disagreed about Miss Blackburn, also about the heritage which she was to receive from her uncle."

With this damning bit of evidence the servant's examination ended.

Frederick Hicks, the chauffeur, was called. He corroborated Zuttermeister's statement that they frequently met in the chauffeur's rooms above the garage and that they had been there on the previous evening when the two shots were fired.

The two policemen, Flynn and Kelly, were examined next, and declared they had searched the house from top to bottom soon after the murder, and had found nothing—no clue whatever to the murder.

Finished with the policeman, the coroner called:

"Mr. Douglas Quinn!"

Throughout the inquest Quinn had intermittently been "sizing up" the coroner's jury, composed of men gathered hastily together in the neighborhood, and he perceived in them, or believed he did, a determination to have Marjorie held for murder. This and the testimony of Zuttermeister persuaded him to do a desperate thing.

As he crossed the room and took the chair, facing the coroner across the table, he was fully resolved there was but one way left to save the girl he had hoped to marry, and he unhesitatingly took this way, heedless of its peril.

"Mr. Quinn," said the coroner, "can you supply any clue to the identity of the person who killed Judge Rufus Blackburn in this house last night?"

"I can do even better than that," said Quinn, looking the coroner steadily in the eye. "I can tell you who the person is. *I am the person who killed Judge Blackburn!*"

Had Quinn exploded a stick of dynamite in the room it could scarcely have caused a more violent commotion. Reporters dashed for telephones, frantically eager to serve the sensational news, redhot, to the public. There was a perceptible stir among the jurors. A buzz of comment rippled among the spectators. The amazing, wholly unexpected confession, coming like a thunderbolt from a cloudless sky, startled everybody. As the excitement subsided somewhat the coroner, with an effort to conceal his own astonishment, asked:

"Will you tell us why you killed Judge Blackburn?"

"Certainly," replied Quinn. "The judge and I quarreled last night—about a personal matter—and I left his study, nursing a grudge against him. On the way out I stopped in Miss Blackburn's sitting-room and slipped her revolver in my pocket while she wasn't looking. Then, instead of leaving the house as she supposed I did, I went back upstairs to the judge's study. I found him sitting at the desk. He was alone. I called his name. He turned and looked at me, and I shot him twice through the heart."

The coroner held up the sheet of blue notepaper.

"What about this?" he asked.

"I wrote it myself," said Quinn.

"How did you procure this particular sheet of writing-paper?"

"Easily enough. Yesterday morning I re-

ceived a communication from Miss Blackburn written on her private stationery, and I removed one-half of the notepaper and wrote the message on that."

"Have you any particular reason, Mr. Quinn, for desiring to make this voluntary confession?"

"None—except that I don't want to see any innocent person falsely accused."

The physician appeared in the library doorway supporting Marjorie, who was still very pale.

"Miss Blackburn," said he, "has consented to resume her testimony, if you so desire."

"Thank you, Miss Blackburn," said the coroner, "but it will hardly be necessary now. Mr. Quinn has just confessed that he killed your uncle."

A horrified gasp escaped from her lips as her wide blue eyes turned swiftly upon Quinn, and he saw in her face not only fear and stark astonishment, but—*belief!* She really believed he had slain her uncle!

Her eyes slowly returned to the coroner. She was trembling from head to foot. She moistened her feverish lips.

"No!" she exclaimed in a terrified voice, barely above a whisper. "He was not telling the truth. He was only trying to protect me. It was *I* who killed Uncle Rufus!"

The jury returned the only verdict possible in the strange circumstances. After hearing the maid-servant testify that she had admitted Quinn to the house *after* the murder, the jurors visited the study with the coroner, considered the possibility of suicide, and decided that Judge Blackburn had met his death at the hands of an unknown assailant. And they recommended that both Marjorie Blackburn and Douglas Quinn be held.

CHAPTER SEVEN

QUINN DOES SOME DETECTIVE WORK

THE thing that stood gloriously forth in Quinn's mind was that Marjorie, believing him a murderer, had offered to sacrifice herself for him. He assured himself that she was as innocent as he. He hadn't forgotten, nor would he soon forget, the look in her eyes when she was told that he had confessed. That look declared—to him at least—her innocence. And he meant to prove this innocence to the world.

His first act, after being placed under arrest, was to retain a good criminal lawyer (who was indebted to him for a good deal of priceless publicity in *The Star*), and this gentleman, instituting *habeas corpus* proceedings, contrived to gain his release on bond.

And on the following night he returned, quietly and unperceived, to the Blackburn home, his mind fully set on at least two definite points. First, he surreptitiously measured the distance from the house to the garage at the rear. Next he determined, with a fair degree of accuracy, the distance from the house to the spot where he was when he had heard the two revolver shots. Less than one hundred feet separated the house from the garage, while the other distance was more than twice as far. And yet Zuttermeister, according to his own testimony, had not reached the house until several minutes after Quinn had reached it!

Zuttermeister had said, and the chauffeur had borne him out, that he was in the garage, or one hundred feet from the house, when the shots were fired and that he had rushed forthwith to the house and upstairs to the judge's study. Why, then, had it taken him longer than Quinn, who was more than twice as far away?

With his mind concentrated on this significant question Quinn walked slowly back along the sidewalk toward the Blackburn home. Suddenly he stopped and quickly concealed himself behind a tree. Zuttermeister, muffled in a heavy overcoat and wearing a fur cap that came well down upon his head, had emerged from a side door of the house and was carefully scanning his environment, his attitude denoting a fear of being observed.

Peering around the tree, Quinn saw him pull the cap lower on his head and make off down the street.

Quinn followed him.

Zuttermeister, with the furtive air of one who fears pursuit, boarded a street car at the next corner, and Quinn, following not far behind, hailed a passing taxicab, and the chase was on.

Sitting on the front seat beside the chauffeur, Quinn kept the street car in sight as it bowled noisily through the cross-town streets. When Zuttermeister alighted at a dark corner far out in a mean section of the city and strode rapidly off into the shadows, Quinn sprang to the ground.

"Come on!" he said to the taxi driver. "We've got to follow that man! It's a matter of life and death. Hurry!"

But the chauffeur hesitated.

"Not so fast!" he said doubtfully. "I ain't so sure——"

"Don't stall!" interrupted Quinn, impatiently. "Here's a ten-case note for you," pressing a ten-dollar bill upon the man. "Come along now!"

The driver, pocketing the banknote, climbed down from his seat and hurried off with the young reporter.

Several blocks away they discerned Zuttermeister hastening on ahead with rapid strides. Maintaining a discreet distance behind him, they saw him enter a dark alley beside a two-story frame building, the lower floor of which was occupied by a grocery store.

Quinn, leading the way into the alley, came upon a rickety stairway at the rear of the building, and he divined that Zuttermeister had ascended to the upper floor. He whispered to the chauffeur:

"Wait here. Keep your eye peeled. I'm going upstairs."

"Better be careful, boss. Have you got a gun?"

"No; but I've got two good fists," said Quinn, his foot on the lower step. "Hide yourself behind that barrel over there and look alive. If anybody comes down follow him. Don't let him out of your sight for a minute. Trail him wherever he goes, and at the first chance you have report to detective headquarters."

Slowly, cautiously, the young man climbed the wooden steps. At the top landing was a door, and beyond a window. A pale light glowed at the window. And when Quinn peeped through the window pane he caught his breath in a sudden gasp of amazement.

For he realized now—and he wondered that he hadn't suspected it earlier—who had killed Judge Blackburn.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE CONFESSION OF GUILT

IT was an uncommonly dark night, and since this squalid part of the city was poorly illuminated the landing was shrouded in blackness.

Quinn, crouching behind a metal garbage-pail, waited until the door opened and Zuttermeister came out. Nor did he stir from his hiding-place until he was sure that Zuttermeister had reached the street.

Then he stepped to the door and tried the knob. The door was locked. He rapped thrice on the panel.

A voice called to him through the door:

"That you, Zutt?"

"Yup," said Quinn, disguising his voice. "Forgot something. Open up."

Following a brief pause, the door was opened cautiously, and Quinn quickly shoved his way inside, closed the door behind him and stood with his back against it.

The room in which he found himself was small and shabbily furnished, and the only illumination was supplied by a flickering gas-jet above a broken washstand.

The trampish man who had opened the door was of small stature, and his face was covered with a ragged beard. Two fingers were missing from his right hand. Indubitably he was the unwholesome-looking person whom Quinn and Marjorie had seen watching them through the library window on that memorable afternoon.

He shrank back from Quinn, groping behind him for support, his unclean face convulsed with fear.

"What d'you want here?" he croaked.

"I want you," said Quinn, advancing. "You might just as well come peacefully and save yourself a lot of trouble. Zuttermeister has squealed."

"Squealed!" The tramp's fumbling hand encountered the wash-stand, and he paused there, his sunken eyes blazing with wrath.

"Sure!" replied Quinn, easily. "We nabbed him as he left this room a moment ago. My men are holding him downstairs now. He made a complete confession——"

"I don't believe a word of it! You can't frame me for anything."

"All right. Listen to this: Zuttermeister said you're the man who killed Judge Blackburn. He told us just how you did it——"

"That's a lie!" the man interrupted.

"No, it's the truth."

"You're lyin', I say! I didn't——"

"He said," continued Quinn, paying no heed to the interruption, "he got you a job in Judge Blackburn's home, washing windows. He let you get the 'lay' of the house. He hid you in a closet of Miss Blackburn's sitting-room. When you heard her enter her bedroom you slipped out, grabbed her revolver, and ran upstairs and shot her uncle.

"You laid the revolver on the floor," Quinn went on, watching the other's contorted face, "hurried out upon the small veranda which opens off the judge's study, climbed upon the roof and hid inside the house until Zuttermeister let you escape."

Quinn paused, still watching the man narrowly. His accusation, of course, was based largely on surmise; but he knew he had come not far from the truth when the shriveled little man, grinding his teeth in helpless rage, swore vividly at Zuttermeister.

"All right," he said at last. "I'll kick in. What's the use o' my stallin' you off when that dirty rat has squealed! I bumped off Judge Blackburn."

CHAPTER NINE

"ALL'S WELL——"

AT detective headquarters the missing details were speedily obtained. Zuttermeister, who had returned to the Blackburn home (with the taxi driver shadowing him), was arrested; and when told that his confederate had confessed he, too, made a complete confession.

Both Zuttermeister and his accomplice were friends of the I. W. W. whom Judge Blackburn had sentenced to the federal penitentiary, and, maddened with rage, thirsting for vengeance, they had craftily plotted to slay the judge.

Securing employment in Judge Blackburn's house, Zuttermeister had purloined a sheet of Marjorie's note paper and written his anonymous letter, threatening the life of her uncle. Then, further to divert suspicion her way, he had hidden the murderer in her sitting-room so that he might commit the crime with her revolver. Following the murder, he had climbed upon the roof, descended to a rear room by way of the attic, and was spirited away by Zuttermeister while Quinn was searching for him.

With both confessions made and signed, Quinn walked to the telephone and called up the city editor of *The Star* and gave him the "story." And then, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, he telephoned to Marjorie.

"BOTTLED SUNSHINE"

"BOTTLED SUNSHINE" or "Hehos," as it is labeled in drugstores in Paris, is getting its inventor into trouble with the police. An old man, who puts his new product on the market with the claim that it is a cure for tuberculosis and other ills, says he discovered a means of extracting fluid from the sun when as a post-office clerk he accompanied an official mission to Central Africa.

He has no degree, and, as he neglected to state the composition of his medicine on the label, he is accused of violating the law regulating the sale of patent medicines. A magistrate accompanied by a professor from a school of pharmacy instructed to investigate the matter found the inventor living in a shanty outside of Auteuil.

From an iron and rod on the roof a number of wires ran into two huge receivers in the court-yard, the whole installation looking like an electric plant. The receivers were filled with a syrup of a sticky nature which the old man claimed was extract of sun. He talks seriously about it and says also that he has recently discovered a method of transmutation of metals.

Bitter Sweets

by

Albert Chenicek

"SWANK" BEATON'S awe of women was a curious thing. A big, strapping fellow, and more than a match for any of the denizens of the underworld with whom he came in intimate daily contact, he was as a child where the petticoated sex was concerned. Women stared and completely flabbergasted him, and he would no more have considered "pal-ing" with one of them, as many of his friends did, than he would have thought of walking into police headquarters with the proceeds of his latest achievement in housebreaking in his pockets.

Unlike those of his kind who had at some time or another felt the claws under the velvet of feminine fingers and had not forgotten, he did not seek to relieve his fear and embarrassment by turning cynical, or by making derogatory remarks about the "molls." He didn't understand them, and knew it, and so simply avoided them and let it go at that. If, as happened infrequently, chance decreed that he hold conversation or make business arrangements with a girl or a woman, he was always polite, in his interpretation of the word, and strived hard not to give offence. Swank had the instincts of a gentleman.

He lived in horror of the possibility of stumbling upon a woman some time when he was engaged in his accepted profession of housebreaking. He often thought about it, and wondered what he would do in that event. He loved his liberty—two terms at Joliet had strengthened that love—and yet he felt that if he was surprised by a woman while he was at work, he would lack the courage to treat her as roughly as he would a man. He would not hesitate to give battle to a man or two or three men, and he would care little how many heads he cracked. But women were fragile things, and gentle, and must not be dealt with severely. That was his code.

So it was that when he had decided upon the Morris home as the scene of his next operations, he carefully noted the goings and comings of all the members of the household, particularly those of the feminine sex. For a week he watched and studied. He learned that there were six in the family—the old couple, three sons, one past the voting age, and a daughter of about twenty. Besides these there was a maid and a man-of-all-work and the cook.

The cook, he learned, did not live in the house, but went home nights. The man-of-all-work had a room in the garage. The maid had every Thursday afternoon and evening off.

Therefore he decided that his venture must be made on a Thursday. He would watch

every Thursday until the entire family was gone. They often went to the theatre in a group, he discovered; he had but to wait until that event came upon a Thursday.

A month passed, and finally his patience was rewarded. From his hiding-place behind some bushes on a wide lawn across the street he saw the family leave. He counted them carefully. Yes, there was the old couple, the oldest son, the girl, and the two boys. The house was empty.

Cautiously he left his refuge and made his way towards the rear of the Morris home. He presently came to the garage. A glance through a window with the shade not quite down revealed the man-of-all-work seated at a table immersed in a newspaper. Swank noted that the window was closed. Good enough; there would be less danger of the man accidentally hearing him make his way into the house. Swank did not intend to make any noise at all, but accidents were bound to happen occasionally.

He slipped through the darkness, and five minutes later was at the door of the kitchen. He paused for a minute to listen. No sound save the racket of a passing automobile came to his ears.

He drew out a bunch of keys from his coat pocket and rapidly tried one after the other in the lock. The fifth one fitted. But the door did not swing in at his pressure.

Carefully he tested it, and discovered that safety catches were above the lock and below it. He was not disappointed. He had expected that to be the case. His only reason for attempting to get in in that manner was that sometimes householders were careless.

He left the porch, and in the black shadows made his way to a basement window. A piece of steel came from out of his pocket, and, using that for a lever, he pried at the bottom of the frame. But the lock did not snap as he expected.

There was but one thing to do. He waited until he heard another automobile coming, and then, when the noise was at its height, he thrust the metal bar through the glass of the window. A second later his hand was inside, unfastening the two catches that held the window shut.

Everything all right so far. The slight tinkle of the glass could not have been heard five feet away. Swank lifted the lower section of the frame and thrust one leg inside. For a brief moment he hesitated, and then, after lighting up the interior of the basement for a split second with the pocket-flash he carried, he crawled inside.

Silence.

Cautiously he made his way to the stairs leading to the first floor. The stairs creaked slightly as he mounted them, but it didn't matter much. The house was empty, and sounds could not reach outside.

Groping his way around with only occasional help from his light, Swank presently found himself in what was plainly the living-room.

"Nothin' here for me," he told himself. "I've got to go upstairs."

He found the stairs, and once more ascended, this time on a heavy carpet that muffled his footsteps. He turned in at the first door on the right when he reached the top.

His flash, used with discretion, revealed that it was a bedroom. Here was what he wanted. Quickly he went to a dresser in one corner, and then, his light fixed so that it shed a steady gleam, he opened the top drawer.

At that precise moment the room was flooded with light. With an exclamatin of dismay Swank whirled around. A girl was standing in the doorway, her hand still on the push-button.

She stared at him, and then her red lips parted for a scream. Swank saw and understood. At that moment his desire for liberty overcame the panic the presence of women always threw him into, and with one wild leap he crossed the room and clapped a hand over her mouth.

She struggled to get free, but he held her tight. Then, as she relaxed, he saw that she had fainted. The face was dead white.

He carried her tenderly to a chair, amazed at his own temerity. Then, taking some soft clothes from the bureau drawer, he tied her hands and feet, and put a gag across the mouth that had almost spelled prison for him.

By this time the girl had regained her senses and sat looking at him with wide eyes from which the fright slowly disappeared. Perhaps it was the picture Swank presented as he stood

by the door, his face wet with perspiration and red with embarrassment, that caused the change. She was dressed in sheer negligee.

Swank's mind at that particular moment was in a turmoil. He had half a notion to flee wildly from the house, away from those staring and now amused eyes of the pretty girl in flimsy clothes he had dared, he knew not how, to capture. He wondered dimly how she had happened to be in the building.

Yet he resisted the temptation to flee. The worst was over, and now all he had to do was to finish the task of finding whatever valuables there might be. But he stood gazing at her, unable to understand his own audacity.

The girl was shaking and wriggling her head in mute protest at the gag. Swank approached her slowly.

"You want me to take that off?" he asked huskily.

She nodded.

"You won't yell? Promise?"

For a second she looked at him with amused blue eyes, and then nodded. Swank took it for the promise and fumbled with the cloth. A moment later it was off.

She took a deep breath and then actually smiled, to Swank's further embarrassment. "My, that was stifling!" she said. "I'm not used to it, you see. This is my first experience with burglars."

"I—I—hated to do it, miss," said Swank. "I don't—like to hurt a lady. But I thought there wasn't anybody in the house."

She looked at him shrewdly. "You saw the folks leave?"

"Uh-huh. I thought you was with 'em."

"You must have mistaken Jim's fiancée for me. She was over for dinner."

"I guess so." Swank shifted from one foot to another awkwardly. He mustn't waste time, even though the girl's eyes and soft voice fascinated him. "If you'll excuse me, miss, I'll get busy, I guess."

Once more her eyes—wise, understanding eyes—laughed. "Oh, yes," she answered. "You must gather the—swag, is it? That is what you call it?"

He nodded, wondering at the same time if he had hurt her with his rough handling.

"Well, I suppose I have no way of preventing you from taking everything of value."

Swank shook off his uneasiness and proceeded to ransack the bureau. He did not find anything there, and left the room to search through the other sleeping quarters. For half an hour he worked feverishly, unwilling to let anything get away from him, now that he had taken such awful chances in capturing the girl.

He discovered a traveling bag, and after emptying it of its contents filled it with the loot he had discovered. Then he made his way back to the girl.

"I guess I'll be leaving now," he said. "You—you're comfortable?"

"Oh, yes. But it will be a long time before I will be free again, if you leave me tied. The folks have gone to the theatre and won't be back till late."

"I'm sorry, miss, but I can't let you free now. You'd get the police right away."

"Of course I would. But——"

Swank was moving towards the door.

"Mr. Burglar!" she called.

He halted. "Ma'am?"

"Would you do me a favor before you leave."

"Sure!"

"You'll find a box of candy in the next room. I wish you'd bring it to me. It will at least help me pass the time. I adore candy, don't you?"

"Not—much. But I'll get it."

He returned a minute later. "You can't eat it, though. I don't want to untie you, miss."

"We—el." Her forehead wrinkled in thought. "Just take one piece and feed it to me, please. A caramel, if you can find one."

Gingerly Swank extracted the candy from the box and held it to her red lips. She grasped it with white teeth. Then: "I have an idea. If you'll place a number of pieces on the dresser and move my chair up close so that I can reach them, I'll be very much obliged to you."

Glad to be of service and to find such an easy way of pleasing the girl whom he had treated so roughly, Swank did as she requested. She experimented a bit and showed how far along the dresser-top she could reach with her head, and he placed the candy accordingly.

"Thank you very much," she said. "Now

I'll be happy until the family gets back. Good-night, Mr. Burglar!"

Swank made his escape, completely satisfied with the way he had handled a difficult situation. He had gotten the loot, and yet not been a bit more brutal than could be helped. Yes, it was a good job.

A week later Clark, plain-clothes man from headquarters, found him at the Marvel Pool Hall and Barber Shop.

"Let's take a little stroll down to the chief's office, Swank," said Clark. "It's a nice day for a walk."

"What's the game?" demanded Swank. "You ain't got nothin' on me!"

"No? Remember this for future reference, Swank. Never handle candy when you're in somebody's house, even if a pretty girl asks you to! She may be wise and know that candy takes fingerprints very nicely!"

Swank's mouth dropped, and he said not a word as Clark took him by the arm.

Send us a one-cent stamp to cover postage, and we will mail you a copy of "Moving Picture Stories."

SOMETHING ABOUT SEALS

THE common seal can swim at the rate of ten miles an hour, about half as quickly as a dolphin, and the instantaneousness of its turning is like magic. A fish—like flounder, or whale, or salmon—has no chance when a seal has made up its mind.

When we watch a dog swimming we see that it treads the water with its fore and hind limbs, but this is not the seal's method. It keeps its forelimbs close to its breast, except when turning or steering, and it swims like a fish by means of its very muscular posterior body, aided by the firmly oppressed legs, which form the hind part of the propeller. A propeller, however, that does not turn round; it simply dislodges masses of water to one side and then to another, as quick as greased lightning.

The gray seal is not nearly so fast, and it has therefore to attend to more slowly moving fishes, like halibut, which it seeks out far below "full fathoms five."

The movements of seals on the sands are very quaint. They hobble along at the rate of about three miles an hour. The creature raises its shoulders, depresses its head, sticks its fore-flappers outwards in the sand, drags its body forward (sometimes helped by a jerk from the hind legs), sinks prone, and begins again. What catches the eye is the alternate arching and flattening of the body.

A young gray seal has been known to make a land journey of half a mile to a cottage, and when it was taken back to the sea it repeated the visit next day. Short land journeys have often been recorded for the common seal, especially in the case of tame ones, which refuse to be sent back to the sea. There seems to be in seals something of the "local attachment" and "homing capacity" which is exhibited by cats, but most of the data remain unfortunately at a somewhat anecdotal level.

Common seals have their favorite resting rocks, and the gray seal has favorite spots in the water, where it stays for hours and sometimes days.

Unlike the dolphins and porpoises, the seals must have their rest on land. They take advantage of waves to get up on a rocky shelf. They use their nails in clambering. They adjust themselves so as to slip into the sea in an instant. They sometimes post sentinels, but they fall asleep.

And it is then and at the breeding time that man often clubs them.

It is a strange paradox that although man cannot deny a certain fascination that the seals have, he cannot resist killing them when he gets a chance. He calls them lost souls and fallen angels, mermaids and mermen. He has invented pretty stories about them and cherished superstitions, but he kills them at their play and in their sleep, or when the mother comes ashore to comfort her young.

Tons of Treasure

A PARTY of three men have spent the summer in searching for the "Lost Cabin," about which there was so much discussion several years ago. It was built by a party of four men, who made a wonderful discovery of gold at a point supposed to be somewhere near the line between Montana and Wyoming. In less than a week after the discovery was made a party of hostile Indians made a descent on the discoverers and killed all but one of them. The survivor, a man named Thompson, made his appearance in Alder Gulch, and set the camp on fire with the tale of the wonderful discovery which he and his companions had made. The discovery was said to consist of a ledge of quartz several feet in width, with streaks of pure gold running through it averaging from one to seven inches wide. The story was marvelous, and if the public pulse had not at that time been in a feverish condition on account of the vast quantities of the precious metal then being taken out weekly from the placers of Alder Gulch its truth might have been questioned. But under the circumstances no one thought of doubting it for an instant, especially when Thompson exhibited several ragged chunks of gold that had the appearance of having been broken from a mass of glittering metal, and this Thompson asserted was the case. The camp went wild. A hundred men stood ready and anxious to follow Thompson to the spot if he would lead them. But Thompson suddenly disappeared, and afterwards news came of his death in the Big Horn country.

"I had been in California several years," said the late searcher, "when in company with a friend I visited the State Lunatic Asylum. This was last winter. While going through the asylum, the warden called our attention to a peculiar case in his charge. It was a man who occupied all his time in drawing rough diagrams or maps on the walls of his cell. These drawings were all alike, and the walls and floor of his cell were covered with them. They were of some mountainous country, with a river running through it from the south and a smaller stream putting into the river from the east in about the centre of the map. From the point of junction of these two streams a line was drawn due south to a peak, marked 'three miles,' and thence it continued in a zigzag line a southerly direction with the length of each straight line marked. At the extreme end of the line a circle was drawn with a cross in the centre. As soon as I looked at the crazy map-maker I recognized him. It was Thompson. I was subsequently told that after going from Montana to California he had lost all of his money, and then was taken down with a fever. He was adjudged insane, and sent to the asylum, where I found him. He had been there three years.

"We stepped into the cell. I examined the maps on the wall, and asked Thompson about them. He seemed willing enough to talk about other matters—in a disjointed manner, however—but concerning his map he would not say a word.

"On finding that the man was Thompson, it immediately occurred to me that the map was intended to show the point at which the Lost Cabin and the wonderful deposit of gold were located, and the questions which I asked were propounded with a view of getting a clue. After questioning him unsuccessfully for some time, I put my finger on the circle in the map, and asked him:

"'Is this gold?'

"His answer was to spring at me in wild rage. I knew from this that I had guessed his secret.

"We all withdrew from the cell, and at the first opportunity I had an interview with one of the physicians of the institution, and told him what I knew about Thompson. I also told him that there was very little doubt of the existence of the deposit of gold, and that Thompson could lead us to it.

"The physician had previously informed me

that the patient was sometimes to all purposes perfectly sane for weeks, and I now suggested that the next time one of those lucid intervals occurred we should see what we could do with him. The doctor agreed.

"In company with the doctor, I entered Thompson's cell and entered into conversation with him. His talk was quite rational, and in the course of half an hour's interview he appealed to me to get him out of the asylum.

"This was our chance.

"The doctor immediately offered to free him from the asylum if he would show us the way to that point, indicating it with his finger on the map. Thompson hesitated a moment, but presently consented.

"This was all we wanted.

"There was no difficulty in getting him out of the asylum. The doctor certified he was cured, and a discharge soon followed. We immediately started for Montana, whence we intended to proceed to the Big Horn Mountains for the purpose of hunting for the treasure. We reached Dillon on the 3d of June, and took the stage to Virginia City. There we outfitted, ostensibly for the National Park, and continued on our journey. In a few days we found ourselves in the park, and well on our way to the Big Horn Mountains, in which Thompson said the gold mine was located. In three more days we reached the Big Horn River, and traveled up it to the source. This was on the 15th of June.

"Thompson had up to this time acted as naturally as any of us (in addition to the doctor and myself, we had brought along one of the asylum attendants). Thompson said that we would be able to reach the gold deposit the next day, and we were all wild with excitement. We camped on the night of the 15th in a wild place a few miles from the river. Aside from Thompson we were all very tired and slept soundly. When we arose in the morning Thompson was gone. The excitement had evidently brought on a spasm of insanity, and he had got up during the night and wandered off into the mountains. We hunted for him three days, and finally found him lying bruised and dead at the foot of a cliff fully a thousand feet high. In his delirium he had plunged over it to a certain death —probably the night that he fled from camp. We buried him where we found him, and as a search for the treasure would be hopeless without his assistance we turned back. The doctor and his man I left at Miles City, whence they will probably go East. As for myself, I will make no further search for the Lost Cabin."

BLACK-HEADED SEA BIRD'S LONG FLIGHT

STARTING from a small solitary island near Japan, a black-headed albatross followed the steamship Wenatchee across the North Pacific for six days and seven nights, until it became an object of unusual interest among both passengers and crew and several big wagers as to its length of flight.

A too heavy breakfast tossed to it by a passenger at the big odds end of a wager, caused the albatross to turn back on the seventh day.

The Wenatchee is a new boat and in the open sea averaged seventeen knots per hour, but the storm bird did not tire. At times it freshened up somewhat and flew in great circles around the steamer. Because of its peculiar black head, in contrast to the natural silver-white plumage, the albatross was easily distinguished from others also in the wake of the big ship. One very stormy day the wind roared in a gale beating the ship with snow, hail and rain, but through the troubled elements the albatross flew alongside of the Wenatchee, sometimes screaming shrilly. Many on board believed the bird alighted in the rigging at night, but the crew at the watches declared they observed the albatross flitting at intervals through the rays of the cabin's lights.

Meat and bread tossed to the bird during the day was picked from the waves without the great wings being furled. For six days and seven nights the race kept all at fever heat with excitement, and when 3,000 miles from the Japanese island and following a greedy breakfast of meat and fish the albatross turned abruptly and was lost in the distant horizon. The Wenatchee was 1,900 miles from the nearest Alaska point, but the great storm bird is believed to have gone straight home.

Satan's Off-Night

By ETHEL V. TYSON

"COME in," said Carmen Cavela in answer to a faint knock at her dressing-room door. She drew a veil of yellow gauze around her yellow tights just as a young man entered.

"Oh, so it's you," she said, laughing, recognizing her visitor.

"Yes, it's me, and our act'll be on in a few minutes. Ardell has the four brutes in the arena now, and I've traveled with circuses off an' on for quite a few years, an' I never saw a lion act so mean as Satan is now. He's gettin' Ardell's nerve."

"I have been expecting it. He's a devilish cuss," and she freely applied some powdered rosin on her hands. For a few seconds neither spoke.

"Are you worrying about something, dear?" he asked suddenly.

"Yes," she reluctantly admitted, "I am. I feel as though something is going to happen. I wish we were goin' to work over the net to-night."

"Shame on you, Carmencita," he laughed. "How long have we worked together, and been the drawin' card of the show? Nothin's ever happened. A net would lower our dignity."

"Yes, but just the same——" She sighed as she drew aside her wrapper and passed through the door with her companion.

A thunder of applause greeted their entrance into the ring. Carmen Cavella and Ricardo Gomez were world-famed trapeze performers. Both were suggestive of old Spain, especially Ricardo, whose eyes and hair were black as the night. No less black was her hair, but her eyes were blue-black, like the sea at night. They smiled on receipt of the applause and lightly skipped into the center of the ring. Ardell had just succeeded in getting Satan, the lion, into the cage, and as he passed out he shot a glance, half of envy, half of scorn, at Ricardo.

Amid a breathless silence Carmen and Ricardo began to swing, higher and higher. They seemed like two yellow streaks flitting forward and backward. Finally came the moment which was the test of nerve to both. His trapeze was lower than hers, and he was hanging by his knees. She began to swing faster, and then, when directly over him, she fell, while every heart seemed to cease to beat. But her flight through the air was checked as she grasped his extended hands and threw a smile at the spectators. But he felt that her little hands were not warm as usual, but lifeless, and that they trembled slightly. It was the first sign of fear that this little woman, apparently without nerves, had ever betrayed. Thus it was with even more than the usual care that he gave her the daring toss to the empty trapeze above. The most daring of aerial performances continued, and finally was finished triumphantly.

Outside of the tent he slipped his arm about her slender waist, and she shivered and drew closer to him.

"I still feel as though something is going to happen, not so much to me, but to you," she confided timidly.

"My silly little Spanish rose. You did better than ever to-night. Only another year or so of this life for us, and then——"

He did not finish, but before her mind flashed a picture of a little white cottage in old Spain, surrounded by beautiful groves, with a little rivulet winding past the door.

That night the circus moved on. The aerial queen, who slept as well with the steady jolt of the train to lull her as does a babe in its mother's arms, was suddenly awakened by a tap at her door. Springing up and slipping into a kimono, she gently opened it. There

was no one in sight, but a fairly large paper box stood in front of her. She picked it up, and seeing her own name on it, tore off the wrappings. Within lay an enormous bunch of perfect roses, the fragrance of which was almost death-like in its strength. No tag accompanied the bouquet, and she was puzzled as she picked them out of the box and placed them in a vase. Just as she lifted the last one something cold and slimy slipped through her fingers to the floor. With a suppressed scream she stepped back, but after the first shock of surprise she recognized the tiny, writhing thing at her feet as a harmless little snake. With a small stick she picked it up, only to find tied to its tail a tiny sprig of monkshood.

"A warning!" she gasped, sinking into a chair. Trembling, she secured the reptile beneath a glass jar and crept once more into bed. But sleep did not close her eyes that night. Each breath she drew was heavily laden with the perfume of the wax-like blooms, now absolutely disgusting to her. She decided not to mention the affair to Ricardo, for fear is almost sure death to an air performer, and one uncertain move while doing the "stunt" might mean the end of both. She sought vainly for a solution to the mystery, and dawn found her still tossing from one side of the bed to the other.

The next afternoon the rolling journey came to an end. One by one yawning clowns and freaks tumbled out of their cramped quarters and perched themselves at random on ladders and three-legged stools which littered the place. The air was heavy with the odor of black coffee and the musty smell from the elephants' quarters, and tainted even with the fetid odor of the lions and tigers.

It did not take Gomez long to seek out his companion and to lead her away across the lot where the noise of hammers was less deafening.

"We start to-morrow," he explained. "This burg can't keep us a week, but we'll round out three days."

She did not reply, but merely nodded her head. Once more he broke the silence.

"I hoped you would have got over your fit of worryin' by this time. If we had Ardell's job, now, fer instance, we'd have some excuse t' worry. But as it is, we're as safe as two birds up there on the trapeze."

"Yes, I hope we are," she replied faintly.

"Ardell—Ardell," she murmured over and over when he had left her. "He gave us a black look that night—he has acted queer ever since I gave him the cold shoulder. I bet a jit he knows more about that bunch of roses than I do, the yellow cur. He's as sneaky as the tawny devil Satan. That lion'll be the means of his death yet."

By putting two and two together she at last determined that it was no other hand than Ardell's that had tied the omen of warning to the writhing reptile's tail. But why? She had refused to recognize his advances in the past, and since then he had been paying more than casual attention to the sharp-tongued little blonde who rode bareback for a living.

An enormous crowd was present to witness the first performance in the new town in which the tents were erected. The heat within the big top was almost unbearable, and the perspiring ice-cream men found business very profitable. One by one various acts were begun and finished. In the golden chariot Satan sullenly obeyed Ardell, but on his tawny hide he bore bloody streaks where the cruel whip had lashed him into submissiveness.

Finally, with hearts beating fast, Carmen and Ricardo swung into the air. Around they whirled like butterflies, now like a yellow flame, now like a pair of shimmering water fairies when the brilliant glow of the arc lights fell slantwise on their spangle-sprinkled bodies.

Suddenly, like a leering cry of triumph, there was a squeaking sound, then a crack, then a crash, and Ricardo was hurled to the ground with a broken bar of the trapeze still in his clutching hands. He landed heavily, and the whole audience seemed to rise and a thunder of voices pealed out. Carmen, suspended in mid-air, turned her head away from the scene; she felt herself growing faint, and feebly motioned to the ring-master to be lowered. When on her feet again, she rushed after the men who were hastily carrying her lover from the tent. She heard the silver-tongued manager's voice.

"The man is not seriously hurt," he said, but she knew better. Her joy was almost unbe-

lievable to find that the spark of life had not finally left the acrobat's' agile body. Hasty examinations showed a broken arm, a broken leg, and innumerable bruises. His system had suffered a severe shock, but recovery was not impossible. The next day a skilled detective explained that Ricardo's fall had been caused by some one sawing the trapeze bar half through. That some inhuman fiend was seeking his life was evident. As far as possible most of the other aerial performers were rather dubious about working without the net after that.

When Ricardo recovered and learned the particulars of the whole affair, his first words to Carmen were, "Better keep yourself armed, little girl."

She laughed.

"I think you are the one to carry a gun, not me," she answered.

Four months elapsed before Ricardo could hobble about on a pair of crutches, and it would be fully seven before he could resume his act.

One night Carmen sat alone gazing at the serpent under a jar. Then, as if struck by a thunder-bolt, she faced around as some one spoke her name—

"Carmen Cavella!"

Her eyes flashed fire as they met the gaze of a pair of beady black ones fastened intently upon her.

"That is my name, Ardell," she said, rising. "What do you want?"

"Carmen Cavella, I want you, and I intend to have you, or else——"

She ran a white but steady hand through her black hair.

"You'll never get me," she answered. "Now explain yourself. You tried to kill Ricardo Gomez. Why?"

He bit his lip as if undecided how to answer. Finally he cried: "Because he loves you and I love you. But, *Dios nos libre*, you—you are a Cavella, and I am a—a Delganza!"

"A Delganza!" she hissed, recoiling several feet.

"Yes. A Delganza! We are sworn, each by our father, to carry on the old feud begun in Spain by our forefathers. We are each the last of our respective families."

"And so you've trailed me from New Mexico, you snake."

He once more bit his lip.

"You know I didn't follow because I hated you. I came because I wanted to make you an offer. I do not lie when I say that I love you. Marry me, and I——"

"Stop!" she cried. "I don't want any more of your foolishness! You are an assassin; you tried to kill Gomez, and now you want to force your attentions upon me. Marry you; marry a degraded reptile like you? Not if the whole earth fell through!" She drew herself to her full height, and the long lashes quivered with rage.

"If you refuse you will have a living death. I shall kill Gomez, and your oath is to never ask aid of the law. How does that strike you?"

"Get out of here!" she cried. "I will speak to you later."

When he had closed the door behind him she fell on the floor and groaned in agony. She had sworn to kill this man unaided; he had sworn the same concerning her. She had quit the quest years ago, believing him to have died, but now, more poisonous than a snake, he reappeared, camouflaged under a fictitious name. He had the upper hand of her; her lover's life and her future happiness hung in the balance.

For the next few hours she was in a state of frenzy. Finally she wrote a short note and sent it to "Ardell" by a ragged youngster.

A cynical smile lit up his dark features as he read the following words:

"There are two acts between yours and ours. I will give you my decision in that time."

Meanwhile she was calmly arranging her black hair. The mind beneath those locks, however, was in a turmoil, yet it was firm in one decision. She hated the vacillating temperament of the Anglo-Saxon races, and with little hesitancy had made her decision. She would kill Ardell that night, and if concealment of her act was impossible, she would let herself fall from the dizzy height, and so end her life. At any rate, Ricardo's life should not be endangered or his name stained. He would never know.

That night she watched the minutes tick away. Ardell was in the arena now. From the tent came violent shouting, which she identified as applause of the fearless lion trainer. Then all was still. From her pocket she drew

a tiny revolver and waited. Suddenly the door flew open. A voice called "Carmencita!" but at that instant she fired. With a crash the body fell to the floor.

"I wash my hands of his blood," she murmured as she crossed the room. Then she knelt and turned the face of the prostrate man to the light. She opened her eyes until they were almost perfect circles, then closed them, and moaned "Ricardo!"

The noise of the shot brought a crowd and a doctor, who said that Gomez's shot was on the wrong side to be fatal. She brushed away the tears and muttered something about an accident.

"An accident is plain enough," was the answer. "But what was he doing here?"

"You see we act together," she began.

Just then he opened his eyes.

"I came to tell you that Ardell was dead—killed by Satan a few minutes ago. Satan was shot, but too late, and the circus" lost a damn good lion. Why the 'Sam Hill' was you foolin' with that blamed automatic?"

She threw the object in question on the table.

"I didn't know it was loaded, and I just wanted to scare you."

Lies under such circumstances are usually forgiven.

NON-DRINKING ANIMALS

CAMELS travel four or five days without drinking, but they are not doing without water all that time. A camel's stomach is peculiarly made, with a number of pouches—"pockets on the sides." Water is stored here when the animal drinks, and he can draw on these "reserve canteens" one at a time for bodily moisture. His keenness in detecting water at incredible distances makes it easy for him to regulate his water rations between drinking places.

Hunters and naturalists say that a giraffe can do without water three or four days. One famous explorer states that in Africa he kept a herd of giraffes under closest observation for a week, and that not one of them drank a single time.

Some of the African antelopes drink but rarely; the eland, in spite of its bulk and fat, goes for weeks without a drink. The hartebeest drinks when water is handy, but goes drinkless without apparent inconvenience when necessary. The klepspringer, one of the liveliest of antelopes, and the gerenuk, called by the natives "little camel," are said never to drink. The long-snouted dikdik could not get water even if so desired; its home is a hot, dry thicket which it never leaves. The jerboa, a sort of kangaroo rat, is another curious creature of the Dark Continent that lives entirely without drink—under conditions of heat and dryness that to a man without water would be fatal within forty-eight hours.

According to Dr. Heller, eminent scientist and explorer, autopsies on these non-drinking animals proved them not organically different from other mammals. The most feasible explanation is that of habituation. It is significant that no flesh-eaters (carnivores) are among these "water fasters"; it is probable that they, being more ferocious, drove the timid animals from the streams and waterholes back into the high, dry altitudes. As the centuries passed the herbivores developed, by compulsion, a constitutional tolerance of thirst.

We will never know how many generations perished prematurely because of insufficient water; but adaptability, that wonderful power God has given to all His creatures, finally triumphed, and evolved the non-drinking animal.

Mystery Magazine

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. The following are the titles of the novelettes contained in the numbers already printed.

1 "The Eel Man." by Robert Carlton Brown.
2 "Zitana of Maison Rouge," by F. W. Doughty.
3 "The Mysterious Web," by Armstrong Perry.
4 "Under the Hypnotic Spell," by Dr. H. Enton.
5 "The Silken Sheath," by Crittenden Marriott.
6 "A Fortune Teller's Secret," by Gladys Hall.
7 "The Mystic Emblem," by Marie Coolidge Rask.
8 "The Cards of Fate," by William Goode.
9 "Mr. Bachellor's Apartments," by W. H. Osborne.
10 "The Inner Wheel," by Octavius Roy Cohen.
11 "The Voice of the Valley," by Robt. C. Brown.
12 "The Sign of the Seven Sharks," by Chas. F. Oursler.
13. "Under a Mask," by Crittenden Marriott.
14 "Case 4,444," by Gladys Hall.
15 "After a Million," by Police Captain Howard.
16 "Shadowing the Blue Triangle," by Chas. F. Oursler.
17 "The Case of Captain Fortesque," by Redfield Ingalls.
18 "The Bird-Headed Sphinx," by Edith S. Tupper.
19 "The Double Mystery," by Dr. Harry Enton.
20 "The Magician Detective," by C. F. Oursler.
21 "King Cobra Mystery," by George Gilbert.
22 "The Haunted Corridors," by Wm. H. Osborne.
23 "No Man's Man," by Maxwell Smith.
24 "The Trevor Puzzle," by T. C. Harbaugh.
25 "The Trail of Roses," by Edmund Condon.
26 "The Hindoo Vanishing Clue," by Pauline C. Bouve.
27 "Who Was Guilty?" by Beulah Poynter.
28 "The Evil Eye," by Chas. F. Oursler.
29. "The Thirteenth Door," by Edith Sessions Tupper.
30 "The Game of Detective Carew," by L. Jerome.
31 "Law-maker and Law-breaker," by Beulah Poynter.
32 "The Counterfeit Heiress," by Inspector J. Harrigan.
33 "Tracked to China," by Chief Roger O'Brien.
34 "After the German Spies," by May Halsey Miller.
35 "The Clue in the Box," by Alexander Douglas.
36 "Trained by a French Detective," by Rene Renaud.
37 "A Drop of Ink," by Lieutenant Robt. W. Warden.
38 "The Ten Doctors," by Allan Arnold Fox.
39 "The Stain on Page 61," by Chas. T. Jordan.
40 "A Masked Mystery," by Police Sergeant Kelly.
41 "The Black Soul," by Beulah Poynter.
42 "The Sanctuary," by William Hamilton Osborne.
43 "The Mystery of the Seven Shadows," by C. F. Oursler.
44 "The Sign on the Dragon," by C. Martin Eddy, Jr.
45 "The Magic of Detective Woo Fang," by Frank F. Whitfield.
46 "The Decoy," by William Hamilton Osborne.
47 "The House With 30 Steps," by Ralph D. Porter.
48 "When the Clock Struck 13," by Dr. Harry Enton.
49 "A Piece of Blotting Paper," by Dorothy Weber.
50 "The $200,000 Mystery," by Ethel Rosemon.
51 "The Case of Dr. Brice," by Mary R. P. Hatch.
52 "The Phantom Motor," by Laura Reid Montgomery.
53 "The Blackjack," by William Hamilton Osborne.
54 "The Whispering Head," by Chas. F. Oursler.
55 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by B. Poynter.
56 "The Secret of the Sealed Book," by Ethel Rosemon.
57 "The Clue of Steel," by Willis Lathrop.
58 "Alias Louis Vardon," by William H. Osborne.
59 "Mystery of the Old-Time Club," by C. Bingold.
60 "Caught With the Evidence," by Ethel Rosemon.
61 "A Little Gold Spider," by Cecil Burleigh.
62 "The Velvet Touch," by Julian Darrow.
63 "The Clue of the Red Lamp," by Chas. F. Oursler.
64 "The Scheme of Solomon Snare," by W. H. Osborne.
65 "Quicker Than the Eye," by Ralph Cummins.
66 "The Clue of the Dark Room," by Hamilton Craigie.
67 "The Tongue of Osiris," by Marc Edmund Jones.
68 "Detective Wade's Big Case," by Ethel Rosemon.
69 "The Spirit Bell," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
70 "The House Behind the Wall," by Julian Darrow.
71 "The Admiral's Spoons," by Wm. H. Osborne.
72 "The Canine Clue," by Thos. J. Lally.
73 "The Psychic Enemy," by Arthur Wm. Andreen.
74 "The Wonder Girl," by Ralph Cummins.
75 "On the Wrong Trail," by Ethel Rosemon.
76 "The Spirit Witness," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
77 "On the Wrong Trail," by Ethel Rosemon.
78 "The Stolen Year," by Edmund Elliot.
79 "The Affair at Hollywood House," by Wm. Kofoed.
80 "A Keyless Mystery," by Hamilton Craigie.
81 "Professor Satan," by Charles Fulton Oursler.
82 "Who Killed McNally?" by Beulah Poynter.
83 "The Clue of the Whorl," by Katherine Stagg.
84 "The 'Czar' and the Ring," by Edmund Elliot.
85 "A Clue of Flame," by Jack Bechdolt.
86 "The Face in the Crowd," by Marc Edmund Jones.
87 "The Man in Room No. 7," by Chas. F. Oursler.
88 "Four Ten-Dollar Bills," by Henry G. Howland.
89. "A Challenge to Power," by Dr. Harry Enton.
90 "The House Next-Door," by Police Captain Howard.
91 "The Trance Detective," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
92 "Friday at Twelve," by Katherine Stagg.
93 "By the Left Hand," by Hamilton Craigie.
94 "The Melody of Death," by Jack Bechdolt.
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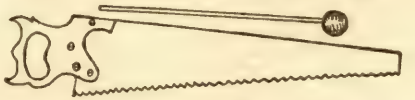

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